MOKEANNA!

A TREBLE TEMPTATION

By

J. C. Burnand.

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&c., &c., &c.

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BY

F. C. BURNAND,

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY THOUGHTS," "MY HEALTH," "OUT OF TOWN," "THE NEW SANDFORD AND MERTON," &c.

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MOKEANNA;

OR, THE WHITE WITNESS.

MOKEANNA;

OR, THE WHITE WITNESS.*

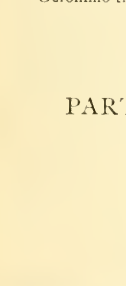
A Tale of the Times.

Dramatically divided into Parts, by the Author of "Matringa," "'Ollow 'Arts," "Geronimo the Gipsy," "The Dark Girl," "Dustman of Destiny," &c. &c.

PART I.—THE OVERTURE IN THE ORCHESTRA.

CHAPTER I.

"For oh! it was a grölling night."
RARE OLD SONG.



HE clock in the old Church Tower had scarcely sounded the last stroke of one A.M., when the little fishing village of Rederring, on the coast of Rutlandshire, was shaken to its very foundations by the fierce storm that dashed the towering and

* The Author begs to inform everybody, including his friends, that he has protected his dramatic right in this thrillingly sensational novel,

hissing billows against the red-beetling crags of the white-cliffed shore.

"A nasty night," growled the coast-guardsman, who, according to ancient custom, was sitting on the highest point of land with his feet in hot water; "but I must keep my watch, silently, silently!" Then singing in a lusty voice the old Norse ditty—

"With a hey, with a ho!
When the wind does blow!"

he cautiously lay down among the rank and damp herbage. A small boat battling with the waves came toward the shore. Not a soul was within it. Onward, onward, until at length, with a fearful lurch, it was hurled upon the shingle.

by having caused several versions of the same to be made for Farces, Burlesques, Melodramas, and Operas respectively. A reduction on taking a quantity. Managers treated with liberally. No Irish need apply. He has also lately entered himself personally at Stationers' Hall. "Mokeanna," besides having been translated into all the modern European and most of the Semitic languages for future publication, forms the subject of a New Pantomime, in which the Author has lately invented and registered all the Comic Scenes. Parties attended.

Note.—Since the first appearance of this novel, it is curious to note that the Dramatic Division of the story has been adopted as a most convenient and effective form by our most popular sensationalists. Who gave them the idea! *I* did.—*Author.*

PART II.—THE PIT.

—♦—

CHAPTER I.

"Slay him!"

FOL DE ROLLO THE ROVA, B. 1, C. 2.

TWO dark forms crept from beneath the keel.

"England at last!" said the taller of the two, in a gruff whisper.

"Is it?" inquired the other. The speaker was a short, stout, hunchbacked man, about six feet three in height, enveloped in a light P-jacket loosely thrown over his left shoulder. On his head he wore a lofty white covering, known in distant climes as a *chapeau blanc*.

"Hist! we are watched," cried the former, in a stentorian voice to his companion, whom he would have called Leonardo, had that been his name. The Hunchback gazed upwards and remarked the clear blue eye of the Coast-guardsman peering through the murky night, over the dizzy cliff, some five hundred feet above their heads. To climb up the perpendicular surface, clinging with his teeth to the softer chalk projections that here and there afforded him occasional help in his arduous ascent, and

to seize the Watcher with both hands, was to the Hunchback the work of a moment.

"Take heed below!" whispered the ruffian to his friend on the beach, whom he had left trying to descry the struggle by aid of a magnificent telescope.*

A human shape whirling through the air, a sharp report as of one body striking against another, a sound like to the breaking of glass, a muttered oath, a groan, a deeper groan——

And all was still.

CHAPTER II.

"Speak gently of the Mister's fall."
COLENSO'S ARITHMETIC, B. I.

"HOW are you?" inquired the Hunchback, softly, leaning over the edge of the precipice.

There was no response. A fearful suspicion flashed across his mind.

"Instant flight!" he muttered, as drawing his ghostly pale head-covering further over his brows, he with slow and stately steps descended the hill.

* The Author suggests to opticians and others, that during the course of this tale several splendid opportunities for advertisements will offer themselves. Particulars as to the charges for insertion of the maker's name in telling situations may be obtained at the office.

PART III.—THE STALLS.

CHAPTER I.

"'Tis Muley Hassan!"
HEE-HAWLEY FARM, OLD C. I.

LIGHT in a neighbouring farmer's stable attracted his attention. A large grated window, about half a foot square, suggested itself as his only chance of effecting an entrance. In a second he was within. Not a horse was to be seen; only one small animal, the Farmer's favourite, known to all the peasants as the Moke Anna, or Mokeanna, as she was commonly called, lay slumbering in the stall. A sudden idea occurred to the Hunchback. "I will set fire to the place," said he. After looking about for some time, he selected two dry sticks. He remembered having been told in his childish days, how that a couple of pieces of wood if rubbed together for a considerable time, would instantaneously ignite. The Hunchback, overcome with emotion, let fall a tear.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, wiping the moisture carefully off the twig.

An hour's patent friction produced the desired effect.

"This is hungry work," he said. While trying to find some food, his eye fell upon a tempting bone on which a few particles of meat still remained. The Hunchback pocketed the dainty morsel, and, kneeling down, was about to apply the burning brand to the rafters, when a pair of flaming eyes glowered upon him out of the surrounding darkness, and a sudden, sharp, agonising pain shot through his frame.

A huge animal of the pure English bull-dog type, whose long shaggy coat and bushy tail were actually bristling with rage, had fastened his venomous fangs in the Hunchback's brawny chest. In deadly conflict over and over they rolled. The ruffian waited his opportunity and dragged the dog within reach of Mokeanna's heels. One blow from the hoofs of the sagacious steed, and the savage hound lay insensible.

The Hunchback vaulted on Mokeanna's back.

"Now for my Lady," he cried. "Away!"

The Farm House was blazing, as, waving his *chapeau blanc*, he urged Mokeanna o'er the Dismal Wold.

PART IV.—THE DRESS CIRCLE.

(*The First Tear.*)

—•—

CHAPTER I.

"The Secret! Ha!
The Secret! Ho!"
N. O. More.

N old old house was Galton Grange, built in the palmy days of Gothic Architecture by Sir Christopher Wren, by whom it was presented to Henry the Eighth, and its present owner, Sir Lionel Fitz Martin, boasted that it had been for sixteen centuries in the possession of the Barons of Galton.

Luxuriant poplars swept the avenue, leading up to the house, with their trailing branches.

Sir Lionel's carriage was at the door.

"Farewell. *mia* Bettina," he said, pressing his wife to his heart. "I shall come back when I return."

"I doubt thee not, Lionel," was his weeping lady's reply, and the coachman, having fervently embraced the calm but emotional butler, ascended to his seat in the rumble, and the vehicle was soon lost to view.

The clock struck eleven.

"One hour to midnight," she said to herself. Two girlish figures, each dressed in a *cul de sac*, approached.

"Mamma," they cried, "will you not trust us now?"

"I will," replied Lady Bettina. "Come, Agnesia; come, Evelina." They entered the Brown Study.

"Listen," said the Lady Bettina, "to my *Secret*. Before I married Sir Lionel, I was young and lovely."

The lid of Agnesia's lovely eye trembled as she looked towards her sister. Evelina, a proficient in the French tongue, murmured "*gammong*" in her ear.

Without noticing their emotion, their mother proceeded.

"I wedded one William Barlow, a man beneath my station in life. Seized with an original idea that my rich brother did not need his money, I induced Barlow to—to—" she faltered.

Agnesia quickly passed her delicate hand from one lobe of her exquisitely moulded ear to the other.

"Yes," continued Lady Bettina, reassured by her offspring's sympathy. "The property became mine. William Barlow, however, was obliged to fly the country. A warrant was out against him, and in his absence, he was arraigned, prosecuted, found guilty——"

"Sentenced?" inquired Evelina, leaning forward.

"Aye, and such is the vaunted Justice of English Law—*Executed!*"*

* The reader, though accurately acquainted with the intricate subtleties of Legal proceedings, will perhaps question this assertion of her ladyship. The Author would remind such an one that the speech is put into the mouth of a lady of rank, who could not be *au fait* at the

A groan of horror burst from their pale lips, and Lady Bettina hid her face in a variegated *bandanna*.

"Some time after this," Lady Bettina went on, "I married Sir Lionel, who yesterday informed me that his wife was still living. He has gone away to seek her. I hope soon to have tidings of her decease."

"Mamma," said Agnesia, "we, too, have somewhat to confide to you. Are you strong enough to bear it?"

Lady Bettina filled up a silver goblet with sparkling *eau de vie*, and drank it off at one draught.

"I am ready."

"We," began Agnesia, "are——"

"Break it gently," remonstrated Lady Evelina.

"I will," returned her sister. "Mamma, *we are not your daughters*."

"I suspected as much," murmured the Countess.

The two children slowly left the room, and restraining their feelings, sought their respective and very downy couches.

CHAPTER II.

"A Light! a Light!"—BURNS.

SLOWLY from beneath the oaken table, covered with elegant *chevaux de frise*, rose a tall form surmounted by a white crest.

puzzling technicalities of Law, and who is supposed to repeat only what she has heard, as will be seen by the sequel.

The Lady Bettina started.

"Dear me!"

He removed the *chapeau blanc* from his head.

"It is——"

"Yes."

"No—yes. William Barlow!"

"You thought me——"

"Dead? I did."

"I'm not."

"I see."

"A mistake. 'Tis a long story. I have been detained."

"Ha! Where?"

"No matter—abroad."

"How did you return?"

"Thus!" The Hunchback produced a small piece of paper to which was attached an official signature.

"I come to tell you—that those girls——"

"Ha!"

"Are *your* daughters!"

"I know it."

"I claim you. Come!"

"Spare me! Patiently I have borne with you. Even when cruelly you dashed out my brains, I did not murmur."

"No further parley. You must fly at once."

"Who says so?"

"I do."

She wrung her hands in an agony. Her servants were deaf to the summons.

"See!" he said, opening the window, and pointing to

THE WHITE WITNESS BACI

AIRS THE LADY BETTINA. [*Page* 11.

Mokeanna, who was impatiently caracolling and rearing in the pale moonlight, "My steed waits."

"Give me," she implored, "one moment to pack up a warmer robe, my *chemin de fer*."

"Not a second. Hark! I hear footsteps! Come!" and seizing the trembling lady by her long raven tresses, he sprang through the window.

A minute afterwards the slumbering household was disturbed by the sharp report of a pistol.

The Lady Agnesia started from her slumber.

"Evelina, something must have happened."

She was right.

PART V.—THE AUDITORIUM.

CHAPTER I.

"Ὦ μίει ἤρ.σα νοῦς
Βυρνῖν λίκανι Θῖνκ."
MOSCHUS. Βεξ καὶ Κεξ.

URING the events related in the last chapter, the farm at Rederring was in flames.

The young farmer, Gyles Scroogynnes, sat up in his bed.

"I will not disturb them," he murmured, gazing fondly upon his wife and children, who were calmly sleeping by his side. He was a fine noble looking man, whose dark black hair, heavy jet moustache, and pale olive complexion, told surely of his Saxon descent.

"Mokeanna!" he exclaimed.

The favourite animal was nowhere to be found.

"Mokeanna! Mokeanna!" cried the grief-stricken farmer.

The peasants and fishermen, who had assembled to look at the fire, turned away their heads, and wept.

A poor man, scarcely able to support himself, elbowed his way through the crowd.

"Mokeanna," he said, "is stolen!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Gyles Scroogynnes, "and you are——"

"The Coast-guardsman. Two men were here to-night. One of them wore a White Hat. The other lies upon the beach."

"But who—who stole Mokeanna?"

The crowd in an agony of suspense echoed the question.

There was a pause.

Then the Coast-guardsman solemnly replied, "Ye ask who abducted the Moke Anna? I answer, *The Wearer of the Chapeau Blanc!*"

"How shall we trace him?" inquired the stalwart farmer.

At this moment the attention of the crowd was attracted by the movements of the hound, who ran hither and thither, as if in search of some lost treasure.

"Justinian," the dog's name, "is on his scent," was the cry.

A woman, in evening costume, carrying five children and a couple of trunks, emerged from the fire.

It was the farmer's wife.

"The Woman in White!" shouted the peasants, recognising her.

"Somebody's Luggage!" exclaimed the bluff Coast-guardsman, pointing to the boxes.

"The fire," she whispered in her husband's ear, "has burnt off the labels; they have now NO NAME."

"But I can prove—"

She laid her light taper finger against her finely chiselled nose, languidly drooping her dark-fringed eyelid.

Further parley was useless. "Vengeance!" they cried, "upon him who stole Mokeanna!"

"Swear!"

As if actuated by one fearful impulse, that vast mass of human beings knelt down, and swore for some seconds.

"Vengeance," again they shouted, "upon the Man in the White—"

The last word was lost in the trampling of their feet as they started in pursuit.

THE DOG WAS ON THE TRACK OF THE LOST BONE!

CHAPTER II.

"The curled and trembling Moon,
Beneath the trees lay lambent
As she fell."
BLACKSTONE BALLADS, by S. WARREN.

THE pistol that roused the Lady Agnesia from her repose was fired by Sir Lionel, who arrived at his own front door in time to catch sight of the retreating figures, who were at that moment several miles away.

The bullet passed upwards, through the window of the first door at the back of the house, and turning off sharply at right angles, found its way to the heart of the Lady Evelina.

Poor Innocent! she was dreaming of her first Ball.

Sir Lionel slowly ascended the stairs, and with great presence of mind, rubbed his daughter's hands and held her head up, while her sister sat near them pouring brandy down her own throat.

All remedies were equally useless.

By this time a fierce crowd had surrounded the Grange, and a dog was barking furiously.

"Whom do you want?" inquired Sir Lionel, appearing at the fifth storey window.

"Guess?" shouted a farmer, ironically.

"No, give him up!" cried the crowd, which was headed by Gyles Scroogynnes, the Coast-guardsman and the avenging hound.

"He is not here," answered the Baronet. "We will pursue him together."

So saying, he sprang from the window into the farmer's arms, and the two strong men, having embraced one another, turned head over heels upon the gravel path.

Once more upon the track of the fugitive.

Onward, onward!

Onward!!

PART VI.—A SCENE IN THE CIRCLE.

CHAPTER I.

"There are two Riders."
EUCLID'S POEMS. "THE PROP."

"SPEED on, Mokeanna, unrivalled steed!" cried the Hunchback.

The banks of the silvery Thames, near Llangollen, came in view. As they saw the fathomless river, behind them they heard the deep bay of a dog.

A sudden light broke in upon the Hunchback.

He nervously threw away the Bone.

"They shall not take us easily. C'Hup!" At this well-known signal, Mokeanna dashed into the stream.

"Whither go you?" inquired the Lady Bettina. She was seated at the furthest distance from Mokeanna's flowing mane, tremulously grasping the only support that Nature had provided.

The Hunchback grinned hideously as he answered,

"To the Ruined Castle beneath the Moat."

CHAPTER II.

"Ha! the Pursuer."
"THE SCOTCH LAWYERS," Act x. sc. 1.

THE Avengers, step by step, were gaining on the fugitives.

"Whom seek ye?" asked the wondering villagers.

They had but one reply. "The Stealer of Mokeanna."

"And he is—"

"The wearer of the *Chapeau Blanc*."

Hundreds left their work, their families, and their homes, eager for vengeance.

"I know you," hissed Sir Lionel in the ear of the farmer's panting spouse, as they rushed at lightning speed along the road.

"Ah!"

"You are Mollina Bawno!"

"Hush! 'twas a fatal mistake!"

"The Proofs—"

"Hidden in the Ruined Castle."

So they sped onward, guided by the Hand of Destiny.

At this moment a loud cry escaped the lips of the Coast-guardsman.

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PART VII.—THE REFRESHMENT ROOM.

CHAPTER I.

'Quid! si sit nobis properare invitus asellus?"
ARS POETICA.

T the foot of the cloud-capped mountain range which crosses Essex from north to south, Mokeanna fell, exhausted.

"Get on, will you?" said the Hunchback, persuasively.

"Alas! she is lame," observed the Lady Bettina, immediately adding in the charming Gascon *patois:*

"*Regardez ses pauvres pieds.*"

"She needs sustenance," said the ruffian; "would that I could procure a truss of hay. Let us rest awhile."

As they lay down to slumber the clock struck twelve.

The Hunchback was aroused by the movement of a foot against his own.

"No heel taps!" he murmured. He was carousing in his sleep.

Another knock. He arose and looked about him.

"Ha! Mokeanna!"

'Twas she, walking erect, fast, fast asleep.

Rooted to the spot with terror, he followed her cautiously. Through fields, over mountain tops, under dark cavernous rocks, to the Ruined Castle.

Mokeanna moved her glassy eyes slowly round as though recognising the country. She opened her mouth, wide, wider.

"Bray!"

They were on the banks of the Thames.

They entered the Dungeon Keep. A faint sweet smell as of old dry hay pervaded the atmosphere. A bundle lay in the remote corner.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Hunchback as he seized it exultingly, "The SECRET TRUSS!!"

Just then a heavy hand was laid upon his arm.

CHAPTER II.

"Casta Diva fra poco,
Laci darem non piu mesta."
ST. AUGUSTINE'S "OPERA."

IT was the Coast-guardsman.

In a moment the Hunchback was bound hand and foot.

"The papers, Mollina!" cried Sir Lionel.

"In the Secret Truss," she replied.

Hastily they examined it. Gyles Scroogynnes, who was sitting on the sharp iron-spiked railings that enclosed the moat, watched the proceeding uneasily.

"See here!" said the Baronet to Mollina, joyfully point-

ing to an illegible codicil in the *habendum* of a closely-written Deed. "You are not my wife. I never saw you before."

The Farmer and Mollina embraced. Man and wife!

The village lasses in the crowd, unmanned at the sight, wept copiously.

"But my brother's property?" exclaimed Lady Bettina.

"Your brother landed with me," said the Hunchback, sullenly.

The Coast-guardsman started. "When I was precipitated over the cliff," he said, "your brother was below. He broke my fall. Alas! he is no more!"

"The wealth then is yours, *mia* Bettina. Hooray!" and the Baronet thankfully turned up his eyes towards the calm summer's sky.

"Bah! she is *my* wife!" shouted the Hunchback, maliciously.

Mokeanna tore a paper from the Secret Truss, and kneeling, laid it at Lady Bettina's feet.

"I thought as much—it was . . . ."

"Ha!"

"A FALSE MARRIAGE!"

"Vengeance on the Stealer of Mokeanna!" was the fierce cry.

"Stay!" said the Baronet, who had been a County Magistrate from time immemorial. "How know you 'twas he? Your evidence?"

"The Hat upon his brow," they shouted. "THE WHITE WITNESS!"

PART VIII.—THE GALLERY.

CHAPTER I.

"His heart was sad."—GAY.

" A! Lost!" cried the Hunchback; then snapping the cords like reeds, he leapt over the heads of his assailants, and made for the metropolis.

The dog would not follow in his track, for he had found his bone, and Mokeanna was still investigating the mysteries of the Secret Truss.

The Hunchback gave one glance at his pursuers.

"If I can gain the Antipodes by nightfall," he said to himself, "I shall be safe."

Safe! oh, Stealer of Mokeanna. Never, never more, for the White Witness, the Curse, is on thy head.

CHAPTER II.

"*Braw.* What says the weather cock, Sebastian?"
"*Seb.* My Lord * * * * I am not i' the vane."
BEN SHAKSPEARE'S "ANY OTHER MAN," Act i. sc. 2.

THE organ was pealing forth Correggio's beautiful *Integra Cura*,* as the Hunchback, pale and breathless, sought shelter in Old St. Paul's.

The venerable Dean, surrounded by a small knot of chubby young vergers, was listlessly sitting on the edge of the pulpit-desk, discussing some stirring topic of the day.

The fugitive paused to listen.

"And who stole Mokeanna?" he heard one of them ask. Before the Dean could reply, they turned towards the Hunchback, pointing.

Instinctively he put his hand to his head.

He had forgotten to remove his *chapeau blanc* on entering the Cathedral.

It was now too late. They were upon him.

Swiftly he fled.

He reached the Whispering Gallery.

The walls rang with the One Awful Question, "Who stole—"

* An indifferent translation of this *chef d'œuvre* was soon after the close of the first decade of the second half of the nineteenth century exceedingly popular in our *Salles de Musique*, and among our dilletanti *gamins*.

He could wait for nothing further. Twopence more and—

"He is escaping by the Ball," shouted Sir Lionel, who, with the Avengers, was watching the chace from below.

The Dean, creeping at a rapid pace up the Dome, nodded intelligently to the Baronet, and throwing away his bands, prepared for fresh exertions.

The Great Bell rang an alarm.

In vain the Hunchback tried to deaden the sound as he clung wildly to the clapper.

Each stroke seemed to say, "Who stole——" He fled; up, up; with hands tightly clasped over his ears to shut out the horrid sound, and at the same time, tying his handkerchief to the top of the vane, he lightly swung himself on to the horizontal bar of the golden cross.

The yelling crowd beneath tore up the paving-stones, and hurled them at the ruffian.

"Surrender, or I fire!" cried the Dean, who was about to apply a slow match to one of the minor canons.

"Never with life!" cried the Hunchback.

There was but one chance. Nerving himself for the effort, he sprang into the air, keeping his feet firmly together, and preserving a perpendicular attitude.

It was a daring attempt, but successful.

The pressure of the atmosphere beneath him opposed his descent, and as he had calculated, impelled him with a fearful velocity upwards into space, but with an inclination towards the west.* Three times he partially descended, and on each

* This apparent phenomenon may be easily and scientifically ex-

occasion he was repulsed by a decreasing force, until unable any longer to protract the physical exertion, he, slightly parting his feet, allowed himself to be thrown in a semicircular direction, and alighted on one of the shining glaciers, lying between the highest points of Mount Périmroseil.

Hemmed in, as he was, on all sides by volcanos, fearful precipices, and wild craters, escape was impossible.

A yell of exultation arose from the crowd assembled in the plains.

Day after day the avenging watchers in the valley could, by the aid of very strong glasses of *eau de vie*, see the doomed man wasting, wasting away; while the Hat, the White Witness, grew paler and paler in this awful agony.

With a pitiful attempt to excite compassion, he, with some particles of snow, which with his hands and lips he had fashioned into a sharp-pointed cone, wrote some words upon the crown of his *chapeau blanc*.

He held it up high in the air.

Through the usual *media* the vengeful watchers read, "I am Starving!"

plained. Supposing A to be a very dense body, any body, on the apex of a pinnacle, B, three million feet above the level of the C, *i.e.* the height of St. Paul's. Suppose the pressure of air upwards to be as 1° in 10, or six to the pound, small sizes. Let D represent something else, say ten, a reduction being of course made on taking a quantity. Then as A : B :: C : D it follows that the vertical power, downwards, is as well as could be expected. The gravity or density of any body can be easily ascertained by working out the above problem in all its details, and thus it is that Nature so beneficently adapts her marvellous laws to the weakest powers of the mind, and to the meanest capacity of the pocket.

"IT IS THE *CHAPEAU B*

'C, THE WHITE WITNESS!" [*Page 25.*

Sir Lionel's stethoscope revealed that the Hunchback had already eaten his coat and vest.

On the following morning the Lady Agnesia, looking through the glass, announced that his boots and stockings had been devoured in the night.

Another garment was about to be sacrificed. She could look no longer.

That night an Avalanche rolled down the mountain side.

One thundering crash * * * A low stifled cry * * * * * *

* * * * * *

As the sun rose majestic in the West, Mokeanna was seen at the foot of the mountain, shaking something in her massive jaws.

"It is," whispered Lady Agnesia, sinking into the arms of the brave Coast-guardsman and hiding her head upon his shoulder, "It is the *chapeau blanc*, the White Witness!"

PART IX.—OUTSIDE THE THEATRE. UNDER THE PORTICO.

CHAPTER LAST.

"Is this the Hend?"
FINIS'S "ENDYMION," BY JINGO.

MANY a year passed after the tragic events here veraciously recounted, and the watchwords, that had inspired the peasants of that part of the country with their fearful thirst for vengeance, gradually became formularised into a familiar proverb. Even in these days, the memory of Mokeanna and the Ruffian Hunchback dwells in the hearts of the very simple villagers; and the sojourner in the little Rutlandshire Fishing Village of Rederring, anxious to obtain the respect of the inhabitants, must, to the perpetual question,

"Who stole the donkey?" be prepared to reply with the most cheerful alacrity,

"The Man in the WHITE HAT."

A TREBLE TEMPTATION.

A TREBLE TEMPTATION.

By the Author of "It is always too early to Sew," "Love me Tall, Love me Short," "Who's Griffiths?" &c.

CHAPTER I.

IR CHARLES BUSSIT was, from an early age, subject to fits, but he inherited the Tuppennie Bussit Estates. Mr. Robert Bussit, his cousin, would have done so if Sir Charles hadn't. Hence Robert's hatred of Charles. Nothing more simple.

Sir Charles, being a gay young man, was on visiting terms with the beautiful La Dorchester. Becoming, suddenly, a marrying man, he fell deeply in love with Miss Isidora Spruce. Robert also loved her. This was an additional reason for his hating Sir Charles, and added fuel to the flame.

From this moment, Robert commenced writing anonymous letters to Isidora and her father. He wrote at least twenty a-day, signing them differently every time. Observing that the letters were taken in, but that the young lady and her father were not, he had recourse to other means.

He called on La Dorchester, who saw through him at once, played him adroitly, and then ordered him out of the house.

This was his third reason for hating his cousin.

He now took to shouting through the keyholes and windows of Sir Alexander Spruce's house defamations of Sir Charles's character.

These energetic means, at last, had their effect.

Sir Charles being refused admittance, had a succession of fits on the doorstep. He was told to move on by a policeman, and was rescued from his painful situation by La Dorchester in her pony-chaise, who thenceforth took the matter in her own hands.

Robert was now delighted, and, on the strength of the probability of the Tuppennie Bussit Estates coming to him, bought a secondhand brass door-plate, with somebody else's name on it.

Sir Charles Bussit got over his fits, and came out stronger than ever.

This sent up Robert's hatred to fever heat.

It was evident that the Tuppennie Bussit Estates had slipped from his grasp for this once.

Then he waited.

But while he waited, La Dorchester acted.

CHAPTER II.

SIDORA SPRUCE was the daughter of Commander-in-Chief Spruce, a retired veteran, much beloved by his officers and men, as a genuine martinet of the old school. So much was he beloved, that when he retired, the entire army retired with him. This led to complications and subsequent alterations in the Purchase System.

Isidora was a blonde, tall and *mince*, with gentle blue wondering eyes, of about the middle height, with dark brown tresses, and rather inclined to that sort of *embonpoint* which is the sure sign of gentle descent.

She was always saying, "*May* I?" in a plaintive tone, which caused her to be a favourite with everyone.

To this her fond doating father had but one answer, "No, you mayn't," which evinced the deep sympathy existing between the parent and child.

"*May* I marry Sir Charles Bussit?" she asked, one morning, as they were seated together on a *canapé de luxe*, breakfasting lightly; "*May* I?"

"No, you mayn't," answered the Commander-in-Chief, his eyes filling with the moisture which so often accompanies the sudden deglutition of over-caloricated bohea.

"May I give him up?" she inquired, playfully. "*May* I?"

"No, you mayn't," replied the Warrior.

That was all she wanted. She had gained her point, and so, tapping him lightly on the head with a bootjack, which she had been embroidering for his especial use, she glided from the room.

"Two persons wanted to see his Commander-in-Chiefship," a servant said. "Might they enter?"

"No, they mightn't," returned the Veteran. So they came in.

It was Sir Charles's solicitor, Mr. Slyboots, and La Dorchester.

The Commander-in-Chief motioned them to a chair. They took two, and seated themselves. So far all was well.

Then what happened?

Why, La Dorchester, with a woman's ready wit, introduced the old Solicitor to the old Warrior, and the Solicitor, with the cunning of his craft, answered to his cue, and introduced La Dorchester to the Commander-in-Chief.

"Mr. Slyboots,"—La Dorchester said.

The Commander-in-Chief bowed. So did Mr. Slyboots.

"La Dor"—commenced Slyboots, courteously.

"—Chester," said the Lady, brusquely. Then they sat still and wondered.

CHAPTER III

N two minutes the Veteran was put in possession of The Facts. This was owing entirely to the female tact and ready wit. She went to the point at once, while Slyboots, with professional routine, would have read precedents, habendum clauses, and the history of Nisi Prius before coming to the object of their visit. He had prepared himself with documents. Before he had got them all arranged on the table, from which he was obliged to sweep the Sèvres cups, saucers, urn, and spirit-lamp, La Dorchester had stated the case. She exculpated Sir Charles.

Isidora had expected these visitors, and, Love being capable of meannesses, had concealed herself within hearing.

The Veteran suspected as much, and saw through La Dorchester's plan. He quietly moved the ormolu fire-screen to the front of the grate.

By this movement of the old Campaigner La Dorchester was unexpectedly checkmated.

Then she told her story, and Slyboots listened, legal documents in hand, dismayed.

He would have stopped her had it been in his power, but perceiving, with the true instincts of an old student of

Barnard's Inn, that this was not possible, he carefully adjusted the red tape on the sixty parchments he had brought with him, and sat silent, with *Blackstone* on his knee, for warmth.

"Hush, Madam! not so loud, please," whispered the Commander-in-Chief, looking uneasily towards the chimney.

"WHY NOT?" bawled his beautiful visitor, at the top of her voice. LISTENERS NEVER HEAR NO GOOD OF THEMSELVES, DO THEY?"

With this the bold woman rose suddenly from her chair, and, spurning the drugget, dashed at the poker, seized it, and upset the ormolu screen.

"May I?" said a sweet voice from about two yards up the chimney.

"No, you mayn't," returned the Veteran.

But she could not control herself, and gliding downwards, fell at La Dorchester's feet, her head on her outstretched hands.

Isidora, from her well-chosen place of concealment, had heard every syllable. She was prostrated, writhing, blackened. For this last she cared little. Soot blackens faces, not characters; this they well knew, and felt it.

The Commander-in-Chief was the first to speak and break the silence.

He addressed La Dorchester.

"For shame, Madam!" said the Commander-in-Chief. Whereupon both women began to cry.

Then the Commander-in-Chief looked at the Solicitor, and the Solicitor looked at himself in a glass, and himself

in a glass looked at Isidora, who, in her turn, looked at La Dorchester.

They all sighed deeply, and said nothing.

In another second La Dorchester was on her legs, giving eloquent screams.

"He loves you still!" said the Solicitor, vaguely. It is in some natures to be vague, and his was one of those natures. Otherwise he was a clever man.

CHAPTER IV.

FIVE weeks after this the bells of Tuppennie Bussit Church rang out a merry peal. The ringers had practised triple bob majors, two bobs, bobs and tizzies, bobs and benders, and other varieties of the ringer's art, until they were perfect in the first two bars of the *Dead March in Saul*. This once mastered, they gave way with a will.

Then came ten outriders, ushered by six hussars, each bearing a banner with a motto, and followed by a van covered with pictures of celebrated fat women, the Giant of Norfolk, the Lion Tamer, and the Battle of Trafalgar in oils and distemper.

Then there was a loud cheer from the steeple, which, getting quite shaky with excitement, tried to come down and join the throng. Presently several Spiritualistic mediums, specially engaged for the occasion, floated about the top of Bussit House, waving flags. Murmurs. Cheers. Tears. Horses heard in the distance. More distance, more horses. Bussit gates flung open, and keepers, grooms, peasants, cooks, housekeepers, butlers, footmen, and pages, all clustering about on each other's shoulders, and hanging in festoons from the heights of the ancient portals.

Then more outriders, riding outside their horses, boldly. Then a troop of less daring horsemen, who, fearing the shouts of the crowd, had got inside, and pulled the blinds down. Then came the carriage itself, drawn by twenty wild horses in front, and pushed up behind by as many more of the same breed. The drag was down, but they dashed through the little village, amid roars of delight from the millions that had congregated to witness this great event.

The carriage was open, and in it sat Sir Charles and Isidora: she quite blinded the sun's rays with her beauty, so much so that some elderly people, more knowing than the rest, got out smoked glasses to look at her, and others, not so learned, thought the whole affair was an eclipse, and went home to write to the local papers.

"*May* I?" she said.

Her husband smiled assent, and, rising from her seat, she leapt on to the nearest horse's back, and performed several feats of horsemanship, which raised the enthusiasm of the spectators to an unprecedented pitch.

Robert Bussit saw, and the sight thrilled him. Catching his eye, she quivered for an instant; but in another second she was back, at a single bound, clearing fifty-five feet upwards, and downwards, and into her husband's carriage, scattering largesse to the crowd around.

Then they swept into the Mansion, smiling, capering, laughing, screaming, through files of retainers in every sort of varied costume, radiant with squibs, crackers, and Catherine-wheels in their button-holes, with which they made a fine display, and Isidora thought no more of Robert

Bussit, than a bright Bird of Paradise thinks of last year's boots.

But Birds of Paradise can't be always thinking of boots ; and boots, with something living in them, may rise up, thick-soled, and kick, until the Bright Creature feels the pain, shudders, droops, and falls into the dust.

CHAPTER V.

OBERT BUSSIT, acting upon the advice of Sniffkin, his friend and solicitor, had married a pale-faced wife. She was the daughter of one of Sniffkin's clients, and had conceived a gentle admiration for Robert's *torso*. His *torso*, and his colour, which was a brightish red, like sunset on a carrot, with just the slightest suspicion of green in the left eye, pleased her. She had fifty thousand pounds, nominally to provide her with a trousseau, and this excited Robert Bussit's admiration.

It was simply *Trousseau* caught by *Torso*, or *vice versâ* if you will.

When Molly Borne, to whom Robert had artfully promised himself some time before, heard the bells ringing for this wedding, she writhed all over Tuppennie Bussit house, like an injured basilisk. On the evening of Robert's wedding she stood by his back gate and threw stones at him. He then saw that for this woman his *torso* had no power. Then he admired her. But this feeling gave way to fear: the Hater was confronted by a Hatred, strong, unrelenting, as his own.

Within a year of this union of Torso with Trousseau, the bells of Tuppennie Bussit church rang again.

This time they announced the first appearance of a small Robert Bussit, and Robert Bussit, *père*, was all over the place with prideful joy.

It was all Boy with him now. His doubts were developing into certainties. His hopes boy'd him up, and so inflated did he become, that, but for his friend Sniffkin and a couple of stout ropes, he would have risen, balloon-like, floated over the house-top, and have been lost.

But Sniffkin couldn't afford to lose so valuable a client. Hence his method.

After a time he calmed down.

Then the Hater came well to the front. He built a tower sixteen hundred feet high, by five in circumference, with a sort of tank at the top, roofed in, and pierced with large windows, whence he could command a Birdseye view of the entire Tuppennie Bussit estates. Here he and Mrs. Bussit, with the Future Heir in Sniffkin's arms, would sit taking tea and shrimps on a summer's evening.

Here it was his delight to point out to the child all that should be his in prospect.

This tower he called the *Tower of Teazer*.

From here he could throw cups and saucers down on Sir Charles and Lady Bussit's head as they took their evening walk.

They wondered at first where they came from. After a time they ceased to wonder.

All this began to have an effect on a man naturally irritable. Sir Charles *was* naturally irritable. In addition, Robert Bussit grew a magnificent moustache. It was the

talk of the whole place. This his cousin had never been able to accomplish. Robert now appeared with a beard perfectly Oriental and a profusion of long glossy hair. Sir Charles and Lady Bussit became aware of his head and face one day, thrust out at them, over the top of a hedge.

Lady Bussit saw and sighed. This chafed the Hairless man. He tried extra shaving, but cut himself severely. Smarting under his wound Sir Charles spoke unkindly to his wife. Lady Bussit bore all with resignation. Let this be remembered to her credit.

Then little, meek, pale Mrs. Bussit, at the instigation of her husband, let down her back hair, and displayed it over the tower. It reached nearly half-way to the ground.

Lady Bussit had nothing of her own but a chignon. Sir Charles couldn't assist her. Then they both, avoiding one another, and taking different ways, would wander down into the village, and stand gazing into the barber's windows, where there were lifelike block heads with Circassian hair. This constant pining produced an effect purely physical on Lady Bussit.

She moulted.

Sir Charles gradually became bald.

One day, in his justice room, he sentenced a gipsy for stealing a hare. The woman was led out wailing and protesting her innocence. It was on Robert Bussit's evidence, and a murmur of applause went through the justice room, when the people saw his splendid *torso* and glorious locks, moustache and beard. Lady Bussit was, on these magisterial occasions, accommodated with a seat on the bench in

the study. Robert walked out. Husband and wife were alone. She threw herself at his knees. "O Charles! can such things be?"

Then he tried to comfort her, but could not, and the Hairless ones wept together.

CHAPTER VI.

—♦—

OBERT BUSSIT had seen, heard, and had taken to thinking.

The result of his cogitation was soon obvious.

It was this.

There could be no doubt that Sir Charles was mad. The French have their expression for his madness, we have not. *Fou comme un chapelier.* What was to be done?

Robert Bussit took counsel with his old friend Sniffkin.

Sniffkin saw the difficulty, and touched it.

Sir Charles's sanity hung on a single hair. On consideration it was evident that he was only fit for one place.

The Zoological Gardens.

But how to get him there?

Sniffkin explained technically.

Robert Bussit was not in a humour for technicalities.

"For heaven's sake, man," he cried, "tell me HOW to do it, and I'll do it."

Sniffkin calmed him down by tickling him under the left ear, and then, quietly lighting a cigar, explained his method.

It was necessary to obtain three magistrates' orders and a certificate of improper vaccination. That was all.

Robert Bussit slept soundly that night, for he saw his way, at last, clear to the Tuppennie Bussit estates.

In the morning he and Sniffkin swore the necessary information, and before two o'clock Sir Charles was safely locked up with the bears.

At three he was fed.

The next day people brought him buns, and he amused himself by climbing up the pole. There was no way of escape; he saw *that*, and submitted.

Finding himself in this situation, he made friends as best he could with his companions, and their eccentricities began to interest him.

In the meantime the other side was not idle.

CHAPTER VII.

OLLY BORNE saw her mistress's distress, and whispered in her ear insidiously.

At this whisper Lady Bussit's eye flashed fire, then she became preternaturally calm, and sent for the Curate.

Now, when a woman so gentle as Lady Bussit becomes preternaturally calm, and sends for a Curate, it means something.

The Curate, Mr. Banjo, came and had an interview with Slyboots, the Family Solicitor.

Slyboots was of opinion, five times, that nothing could be done. This amounted, ultimately, to one pound, thirteen and fourpence, besides expenses in coming down from London.

The Curate left Slyboots in the dining-room, where he continued giving his opinion to the cold chicken, tongue, and viands on the table from mere force of habit, and putting it down at six and eightpence, every time, in his pocket-book.

Lady Bussit thanked Mr. Banjo, the Curate, for his prompt attention to her summons.

Mr. Banjo blushed and clasped his hands.

"I would do anything for you. * * * Lady Bussit," he

said, and sat down, nervously, on a workbox, among the needles, by accident.

Lady Bussit was too much absorbed to notice the young man's agitation.

"Let us come to the point," she said.

"I have," murmured Mr. Banjo, removing the last and sharpest needle.

Then they sat opposite one another, and fixed their eyes sadly on the carpet.

"Slyboots is too slow, too timid," said Mr. Banjo; "*I* would *act*, and at once."

"How?"

"We require a man of superhuman genius." Mr. Banjo blushed as he said this, and slightly turned to the right, then he went on. "We require a man of unbounded energy,"—he blushed again, and turned slightly to the left—"a man, handsome as Apollo, strong as Hercules, clever as Minerva, with the will of Jove, and the pluck of Mars." His face was suffused with blushes.

Lady Bussit caught some of his enthusiasm.

"You are describing *Yourself*," she exclaimed, her whole face beaming with admiration of the athletic form before her.

"Not so," returned the Curate, gently; "I spoke of another; though," he added, diffidently, "I felt at the moment you would recognise the portrait in *me*. It was natural," and once more he blushed, this time deeply.

"Then where is there such a person?"

"I know."

"Who?"

"He is a Writer, an Author, of whose stupendous genius there are no two opinions,* even among his enemies, for enemies he has; no truly great man can exist without making them. Everybody is raving about him, everywhere. His friends rank him next after Homer, and far above Shakspeare. Even his enemies are forced to admit him to an equal pedestal with our greatest Dramatic Poet. He never writes but to defend the cause of the weak and the helpless. His works teem with all the Christian virtues. The numbers of people that have been converted by merely reading the titles on the covers of his books, would alone form a small London Directory. He is thoroughly in earnest. There is his secret; and being so, has already contrived to get several people both *into*, and *out* of, the Zoological Gardens."

"Is it possible? Let us go to him."

"I will write, and make an appointment with him."

"Do. A writer? What does he write?"

"Everything."

After an instant's thought she replied, "Indeed! Then I am acquainted with many of his works."

The Curate sailed over the carpet like an antelope, and

*The character which the Curate here describes, and which will shortly be before my readers in these pages, is no fictitious one, but a portrait, a speaking likeness, of the writer of this novel. Vandyck drew a full length of himself, so did Rubens, so Salvator Rosa and Raphael, Quentin Matsys carved himself in iron on the top of a pump; and, not to multiply instances, an eminent novelist has, in our own time, given an admirable sketch of himself; so why should not *The Auth of this Novel?*

approached his lips to her ear. He whispered, "He writes for *P-nch.*"

At the mention of this name a thrill of ecstatic pleasure ran through her frame. Then, recovering herself with a strong effort, she exclaimed, joyfully, "Do not delay an instant. *He is evidently the friend we need.*"

Mr. Banjo went into the study, and dispatched his note to Mr. Juff, the celebrated Author. Then Mr. Banjo came down again, looking flushed and handsome. Then he blushed.

CHAPTER VIII.*

EXT morning in came Mr. Banjo. Glowing with health and high spirits, the Athlete crashed through the conservatory window, and stood before Lady Bussit. "Coo!" said the gentle Curate. Whereat Lady Bussit raised her head, and listened.

"Shall I read you Juff's letter?" he asked.

"You shall."

"'*Dear Sir,—The case of a gentleman confined in the Zoological Gardens among the bears, by an interested relative, is a first-rate notion, and looks like truth. There is matter in it for a novel, a drama, a poem, ultimately a burlesque, and at Christmas time a pantomime. Let the lady call on me in person. Perhaps I can get her an engagement in London, or the provinces, where, by the way, she might 'star' in a play of mine on this very subject. At home every day, and to special visitors at any hour, if you touch the little ivory knob on the right side of my door, one foot from the step. As for*

* "The length of this chapter is exceptional, but so is its subject. I have attempted to portray the author of this novel—myself. It has been a delicate task, but I think I have succeeded."—*Extract from Author's Letter to the Editor.*

you, I know you. You pulled No. 6 in the University Fours at Henley, and took a threepenny 'bus, instead of a cab, from the Marble Arch to the Haymarket, to save ninepence. See 'Ride Journal,' April 1, cited in my 'Joke Book,' same date, and also in my 'Indices Subjicientes Spectacula, Comœdias, et Ludicra,' under 'B' for 'Banjo.'

"'Yours very heartily,

"'JUFF.'"

"And did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Save ninepence?"

"Yes."

"How noble and how bold you are!"

Banjo blushed all over. It took him exactly three minutes to do this, and unblush again.

Then he resumed :—

"You'll call on Mr. Juff." She hesitated, and he continued: "He won't come down here. A marvellously popular writer, like Juff, is spoiled by the ladies. They won't let him alone. They pet him, play with him, write to him, dance round him, in crowds, all day long. So you can't expect him to come down here on a stranger's business."

Lady Bussit decided to go, took her maid, Molly Borne, with her, and travelling by the Unlimited Express from Bussit Station, was at Mr. Juff's door by half-past exactly.

It was a magnificent house in the finest quarter of Belgravia.

Its site had been formerly a square, but had been purchased (out of the receipts from one of his papers in *P--nch*), by

Mr. Juff, whose quick eye had at once seized upon its capabilities.

Chestnuts, oaks, Scotch firs, and the African pine, so rarely seen in the metropolis, stood between the busy thoroughfare and Mr. Juff's front door.

There were two entrance lodges, which were gems of the best architectural design, and the drive was divided from the pathway by a narrow but clear running stream, whereon a gondola was in waiting to convey such visitors as might prefer this mode of arriving at the house.

Lady Bussit could not conceal her admiration and wonder at all she saw. She had been reared in the idea that authors lived on airy flights, in Bohemia, not Belgravia, and this palace—for it was no less—astonished her.

At first she thought she must have made a mistake ; but the name "Juff" over the lodges, on the gate-pillars, on the gravel of the tramway, on the tesselated pavement (where it was inlaid with costly stones), and on the prow and flag of the gondola, at once dissipated any such idea.

A slave, black as ebony, suddenly stood before her, and facing round, led the way to the Italian portico.

At the front door she called to mind Mr. Juff's own instructions, and pointed to the small ivory knob.

The negro pressed it lightly. He then respectfully salaamed and, drawing himself up to his full height, disappeared.

There was no time allowed Lady Bussit for speculation on this new wonder, for the hall-door, moving noiselessly, and apparently of its own accord, stood open before her.

She summoned up all her resolution, repeating to herself

several times, "Charles, — Husband, — Zoological Gardens."

"*May* I?" she asked timidly of nobody. She was standing on a doormat of the purest Circassian tresses, prepared after some occult receipt.

Silence assents. There was no answer. She advanced a step, and the hall door closed.

So noiselessly was this done, and so admirably did the door fit into the wall, that neither sound nor seam could show her where she had entered.

The hall was of Basilica pattern, lighted round the dome by some thousands of rose-coloured lanterns, which, entirely hidden from sight, shed warm and cheering bloom upon the interior. Frescoes by the greatest masters of the Italian school, rendered the dome glorious and illustrated the chief events of Mr. Juff's career.

Accustomed to the grandest houses, Lady Bussit was utterly overwhelmed by these simple, but artistic effects.

Then it struck her that it was either all a dream, or that she had gone into St. Peter's at Rome by mistake.

"Well, I NEVER!!" exclaimed Molly.

This observation recalled Lady Bussit to herself. She now became aware of a fragrant aromatic breeze pervading the Hall. This seemed to refresh her, and she approached the fountain which was musically plashing in the centre. This was so contrived that every single drop of water from the jet fell upon a peculiarly-fashioned stone, and gave forth such varied sounds as produced a harmony, the like of which Lady Bussit had never heard.

In the centre of the fountain now appeared a lovely maiden habited like a Naiad, who, presenting an oyster shell made of rare Indian pearl enshrined in gold, chased by Benvenuto Cellini, bade Lady Bussit note her name and business upon it with an electric pencil. She thought a few lines, which were suddenly reproduced in writing on the shell, which she forthwith returned to the maiden, who instantly disappeared, while soft music penetrated the air. Turning her head towards the quarter whence these sounds came, she perceived a beautiful Indian girl motioning her to follow.

She did so. Not a sound of London could be heard. Not the roll of an omnibus, not the rattle of a cab, not the footfall of a policeman. Yet, this was Belgravia.

At the maid's touch two huge glass doors flew open. These disclosed a Tropical grove. Mangoes, cocoa-nuts, oranges, hung in clusters. Birds of the brightest plumage and most enchanting song fluttered hither and thither, cooling the air by the fan-like motion of their gorgeous wings.

Parrots had built in the sycamores, and were teaching their young to speak such words as they themselves had learnt.

They had one or two varieties of cry. The sounds that Lady Bussit caught were "Juff," "The Great Juff," "Juff's at home." So she passed on.

More glass doors, which, opening, showed, as it were, the Depths of the Ocean.

Here fish disported themselves, and Lady Bussit and her maid walked on a carpet of the finest sand through stalactite caves, cool crystal grots, and beneath arches of flowering seaweed trees.

Then they were ushered into a Hall of more than Peruvian splendour.

Masterpieces of painting and sculpture surrounded her. A soft clear light was diffused through the apartment. Mirrors dexterously let into the walls reflected, noiselessly, the outside world, and pictured, as it were, the most beautiful spots in the London Parks, showing how adroitly the Designer had fixed the site of his residence.

So far all was romantic: but in a corner, beneath a palm tree, stood a writing table, and over various doors, which Lady Bussit now noticed for the first time, were written "Tragedies," "Comedies," "Novels," "Romances," "Burlesques," "Magazines," and other inscriptions, which she could not at once understand.

By the writing table were huge baskets of gold, silver, and iron. These were labelled, severally, Jokes, Good Things, Repartees, Impromptus, Plots, Puns, Used, Unused.

For Mr. Juff was not one of those writers who trust to the Inspiration of the Moment for success. He held that a good thing, once said, no matter by whom, ought never to be thrown away and lost, but catalogued and classed for reference, so as to be found when wanted.

Lady Bussit had barely time to form some idea of The Stupendous Genius which had done all this, when a bevy of laughing damsels, pelting with choice flowers some object at present hidden from her sight, entered the room.

"Our game is over," said a sweet voice, apparently from the Rosery whence the girls had issued. "Go to your ices. We will meet anon."

The ladies wandered away in various directions: and were soon lost to sight and hearing.

Then The Author, who had been enjoying a moment's recreation, approached the open window.

He was tall, classically handsome, and wore a suit of bright orange velvet turned up with blue ; his *mauve* shirt, made of a material unknown in this country, was fastened at the throat by one magnificent diamond. His delicately chiselled hands peeped out, small and white, from the ruffles of the real point lace with which his wristbands were trimmed.

His shoes were of a rich crimson, which afforded an admirable setting for the amethysts, rubies, and smaller diamonds with which they were bespangled.

He was smoking a delicately-perfumed cigarette, and playing a mandoline, as he entered the room and stood before them.

CHAPTER IX.

ADY BUSSIT was agitated.

Mr. Juff saw this at once, and touched a spring in the wall. Thence issued a small silver salver, bearing an ancient beaker. He touched another spring just above. Thence flowed out a liquid bright and sparkling. With this he filled the beaker, and handed it to Lady Bussit.

"*May* I?" she inquired, faintly.

"Certainly. It will not hurt you. It is simply *Allsopina.* If it was Bass I should say something about *Basso profondo.*

Saying this he turned to one of his buckets, then to a large ledger, and made a formal entry under the letter B. The book was labelled "*Good things to say.*" He then referred to a quarto index, which was standing, open, on a gothic brazen eagle near the writing-table. In this he made a private mark, for reference, also under letter B; and this being done, he turned to attend to his visitor.

Then she told him all.

Mr. Juff appeared to be thinking intently.

The result was soon apparent.

"How are you?" he inquired.

She glanced at her maid.

Mr. Juff was on the alert in an instant, and, springing, from his chair, placed himself, at one bound, between them.

"Now then," he cried, "No larks: I want the truth." Then he repeated, "How are you?"

Lady Bussit paused. Reflecting, however, that she could gain nothing by concealment, she replied, "Pretty well thank you; how are you?"

Mr. Juff thus challenged, begged a moment's delay. Then he put his hands into his pockets and drew forth a pair of shining bones. On these he performed several sonatos. After he had finished, this strange romantic creature danced a saraband, and then pushing forward from a corner a small rostrum made of cedar wood inlaid with gold and ivory, he mounted it, and addressed them.

"Lady Bussit and Maid, your husband is locked up in the Zoological Gardens. From what I have heard, I gather that loss of hair has affected his brain. He has become light-headed. Robert Bussit thinks this an opportunity for confining his cousin, and putting him under lock and key." He reflected for an instant, and then descending, rushed to his folio labelled "Jokes," wherein he made a note under the letter H, "*Hair . . . Locks . . . double meaning.*" Then he wrote a reference in his index. After this he resumed his position.

"This misfortune has re-acted upon *you*. I have eyes and see it. The question simply is, *Do you want luxuriant hair, whiskers and moustachios?* Don't be alarmed. You shan't be like Julia Pastrana, a very amiable young lady with

whom I have the pleasure to be acquainted." Here he kissed the tips of his fingers, and then continued. "No; you shall not even be compelled to dye." Here he dashed down again, and made another couple of entries under the letter "D—*Die—Dye*"—for future use, while Lady Bussit watched him with anxious interest. Gradually she came to respect his manliness, his courtesy, and to admire and understand his brilliant genius. He went on, "We will bide our time. In a week you will be ready to act. So will Sir Charles, to whom you shall convey a receipt with which I will furnish you."

"How great! how clever you are!"

"I am. But, as the French say, *cela va sans dire*. Let us fix our attention on the one point. Leave all to me. When you feel that the moment has come, merely drop me a line, saying '*Hair you ready! If so go a-head.*' I shall then *act*. By the way, what is the name of the man who feeds the bears at three o'clock?"

Lady Bussit thought for an instant. Then she replied, "Smith."

Mr. Juff turned to his index, and under the letter "S" found the name required.

"Good," he said, "he comes of an old French family. Now listen to me. I know how to deal with Smith. Smith is a snob. Go to the Zoological in State. Outriders, trumpets, flags, you understand."

"I do. I've got them all."

Juff bounded into the air with a loud cry, "Eureka! Hooray! Bravo! My! Here we are again! How are

you to-morrow ! See what I've found ! " he shouted, like an elephant in an ecstasy.

Lady Bussit clasped her hands with joy. Electric fire coursed through her veins. She caught his enthusiasm. So did Molly. With a wild triumphant roar they all three sprang from their seats, and joining hands, bounded about the room. Guns went off in the ante-room, and jubilant music on hidden organs pealed forth a victorious chorus.

Then they cooled down, and Mr. Juff stamping his foot, the floor opened, and therefrom arose an elegantly-served table, bearing upon its marble top, gooseberries stuffed with cream, and iced flounders.

He made both mistress and maid drink a bottle of Pommery & Gréno's driest champagne each.

Then he wrote the receipt to be given to Sir Charles. Then he wished them good day.

After this he measured three paces, carefully, backwards. Then running six forward, he stretched out his hands, and with a tremendous impetus, jumped through a small square window in the wall, about six feet from the floor. On his disappearance the window was immediately covered with a large flap on which was printed NOT AT HOME. Taking the hint, they withdrew.

As Lady Bussit passed into the street she heard behind her a tremendous bang, and then a roar which startled her.

It was Mr. Juff letting off a pun and laughing at it himself, for he was hard at work on a pantomime for Christmas and their visit had disturbed him. Now he was returning to his toil.

CHAPTER X.

ADY BUSSIT, acting upon instructions, appeared before the gate of the Zoological Gardens with outriders dressed in scarlet and pink. They had white hats turned up with blue, and yellow boots. A dozen running footmen accompanied the carriage, dressed as Tritons, and blowing conchs.

All this was not without its effect on Smith.

On the pretence of asking him at what time the bears were fed, she slipped a thousand-pound note into his hand, and a letter for Sir Charles.

This was duly delivered. Juff's receipt she put inside a bun, and threw it over the railings. Sir Charles seized it and devoured its contents. Then he nodded, passed his finger over his bald head thoughtfully, jotted something on the letter, and replacing it in the bun threw it playfully up to Lady Bussit. Thenceforward he was cheerful and resigned. The bears amused him with their absurdities. They were all mad. One bear thought he was on the Stock Exchange, and showed Sir Charles a plan for rigging the market. The plan was marked methodically, A, B, C, D, &c., and the poor animal imagined himself a bear of Consols.

Sir Charles saw at once that *he* would never get out.

But from their conversation he learnt something which was ultimately of signal service to him.

They confided to him their secret griefs.

One, a she-bear, informed him that she would not have been there but for the wickedness of a barber in the city, who loved her, though she hated him, and who had paid Smith to fatten her up, and if he could not possess her alive, he would, by Smith's help, obtain her hand, and herself entirely, when dead.

Sir Charles passed his hand over his hairless scalp, and meditated.

Five days later the she-bear was removed. Smith informed Sir Charles of her destination. And now he was really anxious for his delivery.

Juff, too, wondered at the delay.

At last there came a note. "*Hair you ready? Go ahead!*" Then Juff went to work.

He called on a manager of a metropolitan theatre.

The manager had just got together, with some trouble, a "double company" for Mr. Juff's forthcoming pantomime.

Juff dispensed with the two harlequins and the columbines, but borrowed a brace of clowns and a pair of pantaloons.

He also took the precaution of securing five large pantomime heads with various expressions of countenance. To wear these, he engaged four artists accustomed to this sort of work.

The fifth mask they carried.

Thus armed, Juff went to the Zoological.

The men with the large heads, being taken for distinguished foreigners, were received by the authorities, who showed them over the gardens with the greatest possible respect.

This drew the officials and the visitors away from the bears'-den.

Smith and another keeper came out to feed the bears.

The second keeper wheeled a barrow before him, in which was the bears' meat.

At a signal, from Juff, the first clown and pantaloon engaged Smith in an animated conversation.

Obeying another sign, the second pair of pantomimists stopped the barrow, and commenced tasting and bargaining for the meat.

From Smith's pocket, Clown number one extracted the keys.

The man, missing these, turned upon him.

Then the Clown, with the utmost politeness, protested, on his honour, with his hand at his heart, that he could not be guilty of such a fraud, and pointed to his companion, who had already run away, as the culprit. The keeper strode off in search of the latter.

In the meantime similar manœuvres had been executed by the other *artistes*, and the under-keeper was in full chase of the second pantaloon, who, he supposed, had filched several pounds' weight of the fattest meat.

The first Clown handed the keys to Mr. Juff.

Then the two drolls engaged themselves upon a work of marvellous cunning.

They divided the fat purloined from the barrow, and with two lumps of this stuff, they scrubbed the walks of the Gardens, as if they were housemaids, cleaning a floor.

In the meantime, Juff had descended, opened the cage, released Sir Charles, placed the spare large head on his shoulders, and thus disguised, he led him by the grass borders, and, avoiding the paths, to the gate.

So far all was satisfactory.

But the alarm had been given.

Smith and the other keeper, finding themselves deceived, shouted out to the officials, who attempted to secure their large-headed visitors. This led to a scrimmage.

The clowns and pantaloons threw about everything they could find.

The police outside, hearing the noise, rushed in, and would have joined the affray, but for the precautions taken by the two clowns, who had rendered the walks so slippery with lard, that no one was able to stand upright for one second.

Then followed a scene of indescribable confusion, taking advantage of which, Juff and Sir Charles drove off, safely, in a cab.

In a few minutes, Lady Bussit held him, panting, shouting, and dancing in her arms.

It was a pretty picture.

Then Juff went home to work.

CHAPTER XI.

ADY BUSSIT was the first to speak.

"May I?" she asked.

"You may," was his reply.

Then she produced first of all Juff's receipt and the note added by Sir Charles.

She accounted for her delay by showing that the *Perruquier* to whom she had applied could not have performed his work quicker under the circumstances.

It was to be a temporary arrangement.

Juff's receipt had simply said,

"*Measure round the head in manner of a fillet, classically.*"

"*From the forehead over to the poll, electioneeringly.*"

"*From one temple to the other, religiously.*"

"*Write result down in inches. Your wife will apply it to a photograph, and the thing is done.*"

It was the answer to this that Sir Charles had written.

"Here is the photograph," said Lady Bussit, "with your own measurement applied."

She showed it him. A skilfully executed likeness, taken in his baldest time, before his whiskers disappeared.

"And here," she continued, producing a magnificent false head of hair, "is the result."

A loud cry of delight escaped from her husband, as he gently fitted the perruque on his marble-like head.

Lady Bussit whispered in his ear, "You won't mind Robert's beard and moustache now?"

"Not I."

"You will never have another fit."

"I never wish for a better one than this."

So they sat together murmuring in each other's ears.

Then Lady Bussit plucked up courage, and showed him her magnificent chignon.

"Let us be grateful to Heaven," said Sir Charles. That night they rested happily.

Sir Charles rose at dawn. He was for driving over to Tuppennie Bussit in triumph.

Horses, flags, drums, trumpets, and two troops of his own raising with colours.

On their road, Sir Charles, remembering the address to which the she-bear had been carried, drove a little out of his way, and called there.

It was a Barber's shop. Over the door was an announcement to the effect that a large bear had just been slaughtered, and that the grease was invaluable.

Sir Charles's servants returned laden with three dozen pots of the "Capillary Confection." This was the title given to the pomade by the barber, who had invented it himself.

Robert, from the Tower of Teazer, saw the happy pair drive into the village.

Young farmers were out cantering about. Old peasants in their carts. Children on donkeys. Peasants from the

plough. All shouting together in their joy at the return of their kind landlord and his loving wife, and unable to restrain their admiration of Sir Charles's glossy locks, flowing beard, and brown moustache.

Before they reached the village four hundred horsemen accompanied the carriage, while at least four hundred more, unaccustomed to the saddle, were on their backs in the dust.

The church-bells rang ; everybody cheered ; and seventy-five pensioners, whose united ages amounted to six thousand seven hundred and fifty years, sang a chorus of one hour and a half's duration, by the Church clock, which played the accompaniment.

At this Lady Bussit began to cry : Sir Charles bowed right and left, taking off his wig to the people with great delight and pride. It was a Royal Progress.

Molly Borne, seated on the back seat of the carriage, threw her boots in the air for luck.

A roar of cheers burst from the crowd at that inspired action of a woman whose face and eyes seemed to be on fire. Lady Bussit turned pale, but a skilful movement of her head avoided the second boot. Then they all stood up and shouted.

It was open house that night to everyone.

Paupers from the workhouse came into Tuppennie Bussit Hall, and slept wherever they liked, only requesting to have their shoes well polished and bright early, and a cup of chocolate half an hour before they got up in the morning.

Farmers played the piano, and their elders danced in the

drawing-room. Others spent the night in the wine-cellars. No man or woman was denied. Oxen were roasted whole in every room in the house, kegs were broached, and ale, cider, port, sherry, and champagne flowed down the stairs in rich, frothy streams. It was open house that night to all as it had been four hundred years ago.

CHAPTER XII.

—♦—

OBERT BUSSIT was served with a Declaration and a Writ. It was in three counts, in their shortest and most simple form :—

1st. That the said Robert Bussit of ——, in the county of —— on the—— day of ——, in the year of ——, did, of his own malice aforethought, and all to the contrary notwithstanding, molest, annoy, and evict, *vi et armis*, from statutable and possessory rights the plaintiff in this action, and that the aforesaid Robert Bussit did, on the same day as aforesaid, that is, on the —— day of ——, in the year of ——, cause the plaintiff as aforesaid to be seized and removed against his will and consent to a place set apart by law for the legal retention of such Quadrupeds, Bipeds, and others not being *ferœ naturœ* or *lusus naturœ*, in the Park of the Regent in the County of Middlesex.

2nd. *That the said* Robert Bussit (&c., &c. as before) *did* (much the same as mentioned in the above count) . . . and in consequence of such act or acts done and executed of malice aforethought as aforesaid, the plaintiff, Sir Charles Bussit, of Tuppennie Bussit, in the county of ——, on the day of——, in the year of ——,

does claim and cause to be claimed all that part, portion, and inalienable right of *quod ei deforceat*, such right not being barred by the usurpation of the incorporeal hereditament whereof as aforesaid the aforementioned Robert, &c., &c.

3rd Count. *And that* (all re-stated as above at full length) *the plaintiff thereupon claims £36,000 for damnum et injuria, and hereby on the day of* ——, &c., &c.

Robert Bussit sold his house, pulled down the Tower of Teazer, and paid the money. It was a sickener; it broke his spirit.

Defeated at every point, Robert fell into a deep dejection, and took to tumbling for a livelihood. He and his wife and child hired themselves out as "Signor Bussittini and Talented Family." They practised standing on their heads for hours every day. One thing was clear: they would never again alight on their legs.

His father-in-law once took tickets for his benefit. This was all they had to live upon.

He applied to Mr. Juff for an equestrian drama. Mr. Juff wrote it. This crushed him utterly.

He travelled about the country with it for some time; then he travelled about without it.

Much journeying brought him in contact with all sorts of people, for whom he had but one question, "Do you know my cousin, Lady Bussit?"

Persons to whom this query was put, thought it was a conundrum, and gave it up.

Then he hated everybody worse than ever.

One day he heard the bells of some church ringing.

"What's that for?" he asked, sharply.

"Young Bussit," answered the man.

Robert took up a log of wood, and rushed at him. "I'll teach you," he cried, "to ring bells."

The man ducked, and ran out.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR story now makes a bold jump.

Everybody is twenty years older.

Sir Charles Bussit has one son; Robert one daughter.

Robert is once more residing at Bussit, in a small cottage. He hates his cousin worse than ever.

One day Mr. Banjo, now the Perpetual Curate of Tuppennie Bussit, came to Sir Charles to complain.

"There was," he said, "a middle-aged person, in fact a female, preaching in the village; and as she preached better than he did, nobody came to hear *him*."

Sir Charles decided to judge for himself. Being a Magistrate, he was legally entitled to do so.

A large crowd was gathered round the woman, who was perched on a tub.

He recognised her at once—La Dorchester.

She spoke briefly, but forcibly.

She lashed Drunkenness, and then took another subject in hand, Quarrels in families.

"Look here," she exclaimed, "why do you quarrel? Birds in their little nests agree, and 'tis a shameful sight," (*murmurs from the crowd.*) "When children of one familee" (*more*

murmurs) "Fall out, and scratch and fight." (*"So be it!" from crowd.*) "What's that? Watts. Well now, is that true?" (*"No!" heartily from crowd.*) "You know better than that." (*"We do!" from crowd.*) "Very well, then. If you know better, *do* better." (*"We will, we will!" from crowd.*) "Set an example to Sir Charles" (*"Hooray!" from crowd.*) "and Robert." (*"Yah!" from crowd.*) "Teach 'em that their little hands were never made to tear, and bite, and fight. Ask them, How are you *to-morrow?*" (*"Ah!" from* Sir Charles *and the crowd.*) "Ask 'em, How they'd like it themselves?" (*"Ah!" from* Robert *and the crowd.*) "O! my friends, be assured that I'm right, and everybody else is wrong." (*"You are! you are!"*) "Why do you beat your carpets? Why give more?" (*Sobs.*) "Many to whom this question is put will reply, I can read, write, but I cannot speak it." (*"Yes, yes!"*) "O, my Christian friends, the Christy Minstrels *never* perform out of London, and none other is genuine unless signed with the trade mark." (*Convulsions in crowd, and several people led away howling.*) "What matters it, after all, if we can only strike on the box? Let us act up to it! More! Let us double up our perambulators, and moisten the starch of Glenfield with the soothing syrup of the maternal Winslow; then while we Bantingise in a daylight of Ozone, we can indeed aspire to the glorious light of the Ozokerit!!"

The fair orator delivered these words with such fire, such feeling, such clarion-like eloquence, that from the people, at first spell-bound, there arose so loud, so heartfelt a cry of

grateful joy as is seldom heard from the lips of those who are perfectly satisfied with themselves, in their glossy hats and shiny boots, on Sunday afternoon.

CHAPTER XIV.

HE Preacher had vanished. But the fire of her words remained, and moved statues.

The Cousins quivered.

Then Robert spoke. "Chawles . . . ."

Sir Charles lifted his head loftily, but there was a tear in his right eye, unwiped.

Robert continued, behind his hat, "Chawles . . . . I have been wrong. I am sorry we are enemies. Good morning."

Then Sir Charles's Boy ran out, and Robert's Daughter rushed into his arms.

Thus the Children's love wore out their father's hate.

* * * * * * * *

La Dorchester meeting Molly Borne in the lane, called upon her to repent.

"Never!" answered Molly.

And she never did; not having, as she said, anything to repent of.

* * * * * * * *

Robert Bussit one evening said to Sniffkin, "Old boy, never hate anybody."

Sniffkin bowed coldly. He didn't like being called "old boy," and never spoke to Robert again.

* * * * * * * *

Sir Charles and Lady Bussit lead a peaceful life. They both wear their own hair now, and it is quite gray.

Their son and his wife often come to dinner, and have excellent appetites. After the meal, Juff, who has made the house one of his homes, reads them his plays, and sings little compositions of his own to them, playing on the mandoline. In consequence, they go to bed early.

* * * * * * * *

You, Gentlemen and Ladies, who read this, be firm, and if you've done anything wrong, don't be misled by this novel into doing it again.

Be kind, be generous, buy Juff's books, and read all Juff's writings.

When in doubt, ask Juff.

Never consult a Solicitor,—go to Juff.

My experience is, that we're, all of us, generally very nice sort of people, except the nasty ones.

So let us end with a couplet of one of England's greatest writers:

> "Where is the man of truest stuff—
> The Best, the Greatest . . . It is JUFF."

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

From the Editor to the Author of "A Treble Temptation."*

MY DEAR OLD JUFFY,—*Your Novel is excellent. Of course I congratulate you upon its admirable finish. Permit me to ask you, in consequence of various inquiries on the subject, addressed to me in my editorial capacity, why is it called "A Treble Temptation"?*

I remain, my dear old Juffy, yours most Affectionately,

THE EDITOR.

From MR. J., *Author of &c., &c., to the Editor of P.*

DEAR SIR,—*May not a father christen his own child as he will? I choose to call this Novel "A Treble Temptation." Don't call me "Old Juffy."*

Yours, decidedly,

* The Editor of *P-nch,* to which journal, as has been already stated

From the Editor to MR. J.

MY DEAR JUFF,—*I do not dispute your right to christen your own charming Novel. But* how *does the title apply?*

I remain, yours, dear Juff, affectionately,

THE EDITOR.

From MR. J. *to the Editor.*

SIR,—*I can't be Œdipus and Sphinx. It is a Treble Temptation, and the best Novel I've ever done.*

Yours,

J.

From the Editor to MR. J.

DEAR MR. JUFF,—*You are perfectly at liberty to hold your own opinion as to the merits of the Novel in question. I shall not discuss that point with you. I confess I do not see what the temptation was, or why it was treble. Permit me to add that I am not alone in my failure of perception.*

I remain, Sir, yours sincerely,

THE EDITOR.

From MR. J. *to the Editor.*

SIR,—Quod scripsi scripsi. *What I have scribbled I have scribbled. I am answerable to no man. Certainly not to* you. *You have been a dramatic author, and probably are acquainted with French. If so, mark my reply to your question, "Pêche et Cherche!"*

J.

in this novel, Mr. Juff was a constant contributor. The *Treble Temptation* first appeared in *Punch*.

From the Editor of P. to MR. J.

SIR,—*You are, I regret to say, begging the question, while I am begging the answer. The point at issue between yourself and the public, which I now editorially represent, is the exact application of the title, "Treble Temptation," bestowed by you upon your Novel, Tale, or whatever the work may be* out of *your own estimation. Oblige me with a satisfactory answer. Should you fail to comply with my request, I shall certainly publish the correspondence.*

Yours, &c., &c.

From MR. J. *to the Editor.*

Publish what you like. The name of the Novel is "The Treble Temptation."

J.

[The Editor owes it to himself and the public, to inform them that, after some search, he has discovered that the *trebleness* of the Temptation must be looked for in the three reasons for Robert's hatred of his cousin Charles. These will be found in the First Chapter. Our readers may perhaps have formed some other conclusion; but at all events they will agree with the one at which Mr. Juff has arrived, namely, the conclusion of his novel. And here let the Editor explain, that, in his first letter to the author, he congratulated him "upon its admirable finish." This expression might be taken as applicable to the style: it is *not* to be so taken.—ED. *P.*]

CHIKKIN HAZARD.

CHIKKIN HAZARD.

PROSPECTUS AND PREFACE.

HE first novel by the Sensational Novel Company (Limited) consisting of—

The Authors of *Never Too Late for the Colleen Pogue*, *Dora's Vampire*, *Who's Griffiths (Gaunt)? Hard Streets of London Assurance*, *Peg Wojfington's Long Strike*, *the Double Carriage*, *Hunted up.*

Also of the Authors of *The Woman with no Name*, *The Thoroughfare without a Heart*, *The 'Idden 'And.*

Also of the Authors of *Les Mystères de Château Bouit*, *Mokeanna, or The White Witness*, *Jasper's Money*, *The Grandmother's Vengeance*, *Lady Disorderly's Secret*, *Romula and Rema*, *The White Ram*, *The Mabel Falsc*, *Spiritual Columbines*, *Nobody's Nephew.*

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In order to present the public with a work of fiction which shall be unequalled by any similar production of the present

day, the Editor has ordered a novel from the above recently-established Sensational Novel Company (Limited) consisting of various distinguished authors whose works are mentioned above, and whose names it would therefore be unnecessary, nay superfluous, to give.

The Editor's object has been to obtain the most startling, most thrilling, most exciting plot constructed by the most original romancers, whether from their own or foreign brains it matters not, now in this country; situations contrived by experienced dramatists, sharp, crisp dialogue by the ablest novelists and dramatic writers, and descriptions, where requisite, by several distinguished gentlemen whose speciality lies in this groove.

The reader's time will not be wasted on pages of analysis of character, descriptive touches about sunsets, sunrises, trees and the appearance of nature generally under various aspects, which only impede the clear course of the story and tire the patience of the purchaser.

As each author engaged upon this tale has been constantly employed (according to the rules of the Company) in revising his collaborators' work, the desired end has been obtained, and with few exceptions [where the Editor has at the last moment restored passages or interpolated necessary explanations] the story never flags either in action or in dialogue.

That is, *as far as the Editor has read at present*, for the entire novel is not yet in his hands.

The illustrations are, or rather will be, by several artists of undoubted reputation, whom it would occupy too much space here to name, and whose particular praises it would be to a

degree invidious to sing. They are, the Editor is most happy to say, on excellent terms with the Authors of this novel, and therefore he confidently expects the happiest results from such a combination of Genius and Talent.

To his dear friends, the Authors, the Editor turns and begs them to remember the old fable of the bundle of sticks, a suggestion he would not dare to make to a Company of Actors—but to the Literary Limited Company the case is happily far different. Bear with each other's faults of style, and continue to aim at producing by your united efforts One such work as shall establish your new speculation on a secure basis, and shall mark an era in the Literature of our Great and Glorious Country. Now, to the public! *

ADDENDUM.

On consideration, the Editor deems it as well to state, at the outset of this new undertaking, two conditions for which the Directors of the Co., for *themselves*, and the Authors, for *themselves*, have stipulated as a *sine quâ non* of publication in this journal:—

First. That the Directors shall have full liberty, from time to time, to publish with the story such notes as they

* This finishing sentence was unluckily in print, and escaped the Editor's wary eye. It means "now I place this novel in the hands of the public, who will pronounce upon its merits." As it stands it *does* appear as if the Editor, fatigued by the excessive exertions of Preface-writing, had thrown down the pen and thirsting for refreshment, had exclaimed, "Now to the *Public!*" an erroneous impression which he hastens to remove. As Mr. DOWLER said, "Those who know me best, best know me," or words to that effect.—ED.

may deem necessary for the clear explanation of the novel, the benefit of the public at large, and their own protection as Directors of the aforesaid Company.

Secondly. That the Authors shall have full liberty to publish, from time to time *with* the Story, individually or conjointly, the one with the other, such notes as they together, or each severally, shall deem necessary for the furtherance of the plot, their own reputations individually or collectively, and the general advantage of the public at large.

*** The Editor having as cheerfully as possible consented to the above stipulations, now trusts to the *good faith*, *kindly forbearance*, *and gentlemanly feeling* of all concerned in this present Novel, not to abuse the concession thus made, and finally throws himself upon the kindness of a generous and indulgent public.

A few Words as to the Title of the New Novel, "CHIKKIN HAZARD."

The Authors jointly and severally protest against this title, which has been selected by the Editor—[also jointly and severally against all the titles proposed by one another]—as however no better one could be agreed upon, this was at a recent meeting of the Company adopted under protest :—

They wish it to be distinctly understood that Chikkin Hazard (*spelt thus also under protest*) was not, nor is, nor ever has been, suggested by the highly successful novel now publishing in weekly parts, entitled *Fowl Play*, nor any part or parts of it, nor do they (the Authors) think that as far as they've gone the name Chikkin Hazard has very much to do with the Story

Note by the Directors of the New Company.—The Directors beg to state that they have the greatest confidence in the Editor's discretion, and in justice to him, themselves and the Company, they now place before the public the titles originally suggested by the various Authors engaged upon this work :—

1. The Fiend's Followers.
2. The Clergyman's Grandmother.
3. Gentle Maud : a Tale of Saxony.
4. Happy Days in Langouste ; a Troubadour's Story.
5. Sepoy Sam ; or, The Rollicking Recollections of Toothless Tommy.
6. The Better Land ; a Series for Children.
7. Dan, or the Murderers of the Mhoil Dhu.
8. My First Polka.
9. Golly Boy. A Tale of the Early Christians.
10. Boar Hunting in Australia.
11. Glen M'Kroskie, or the Last of the Highland Chiefs.
12. When there's a Will there's a Way, or how to Cure Smoky Chimneys.
13. Sir Martin Nickleby, or Dombey and Twist : a Romance of the Thirteenth Century.
14. Hocus ; or, The Dark Horse. A Confession of Turf Rascality.

The fifteenth was Magnolia, or the Captive Turk : a Poem in Seven Books : and was immediately protested against by every one concerned in the success of the work. Its proposer was unable to see that his idea scarcely fitted in with the scheme of a sensational novel, and he at first resigned his

seat at the Company's board, but an arrangement having been entered into that he should provide whatever poetry might be wanted (three pieces at least being stipulated for) in the course of the story, our kind and amiable friend resumed his functions in the Company.

CHAPTER I.

"I wants to make your flesh creep."
*Words of the Fat Boy in Pickwick, adopted as the motto by the N.S.N. Co., Lim.**

—♦—

N a dim cave, lighted by only one small gas-lamp, sat Michael and Job Friestlor. Michael was Job's father, and older than the latter by some few years.

"Why have you brought me here?" demanded Job, in a hollow voice.

"Why? ha! ha!" laughed the elder, grimly, and both his eyes shooting forth a murderous fire, he rose from his seat and waved a keen-edged hatchet above his head. Job turned deadly pale. He could scarcely raise his glass to his lips as he said with a sickly smile, "Always the same light-hearted creature, father."

Once, twice, the fearful weapon flashed through the air, and then descended upon——

* The N.S.N. Co. is the New Sensation Novel Company mentioned in the Preface. Their first novel (this) appeared in the pages of *Punch*, with whose proprietors and Editor the New S. N. Company had entered into the previously set forth arrangements.

But not on the prostrate form of Job Friestlor fell THE COLD STEEL.*

* *Foot Note by the Authors.*—Nineteen of the Authors (*here follow the signatures*) protest against this finish to the chapter. The editor MUST NOT allow himself to be talked over by the twentieth fellow, who has evidently taken this notion from another novel. (*Signed.*)

Editor's Note to the above.—I didn't.

CHAPTER II.

OT on the prostrate form of Job Friestlor fell the cold steel. *For, the form of Job Friestlor was not prostrate.*

But as Michael bent forward, the younger and more active man sprang upon his back, and by a trick which he had learnt from the Rutlandshire wrestlers, staved in his father's head between his shoulders.

Had Michael been in good training, his muscles hard and taut, would not have yielded to this sudden pressure, and his brave old heart would have snapped altogether, nigh broken as it was even now by his son's thoughtless and unfeeling conduct. But his muscles were lax, and gave to the force thus exerted so easily as to cause the old man a sensation of extreme pleasure, as of drowning, especially when his head rose once more to the surface.

The second which this had occupied seemed years to Michael, who in that dark moment had seen all his young life brought before him, had seen his parents imploring mercy at his hands, his brothers at his feet, his sisters starving under his roof, his aunts and uncles chained to the damp walls, the flames bursting from the convent, the ship scuttled, the Derby favourite hocussed, the bridegroom

poisoned, the butler (who was supposed to have stolen it) exiled, the Sepoy's cruel sword descending on her fair young neck, the fierce animal rushing on him with whetted tusks, Sir Jasper's white hair streaming in the wind, the calm martyr refusing the Emperor's last offer of life, and he raised his hands to shut out these fearful sights.*

A roaring sound as of lions raving and tearing into the cave.

Job knew it well.

There was no hope now.

NO HOPE ! !

It was the remorseless tide advancing.

THE REMORSELESS TIDE ! ! !

In another five minutes the cave would be filled.

FIVE MINUTES ! ! !

"I shall take it in through the pores," observed Michael, in whom the instinct of self-preservation was stronger than the greed of gain.

The aperture through which the sea flowed in was scarcely big enough for a man's body.

The idea struck them both : at once. WHOSE BODY?

"Father," cried Job, kneeling down, "your forgiveness ;" and he clung to his parent's knees frantically.

* *Editor's Note.*—By referring to the titles suggested by the Amalgamated Authors (*vide Preface*) the reader will see that the events of Michael Friestlor's previous life arise out of the different views taken by the various writers of what this novel should have been. The paragraph, as it stands above, is the effect of a judicious compromise.

"Job!" exclaimed the aged fisherman, "rise, I entreat, I com——"

Louder and fiercer comes the remorseless tide.

Seizing his knees, and head for the second time, Job compressed his father into the smallest possible compass, and inserted him backwards into the entrance of the cave.

The wind might beat, the waves roar and surge against that old man, but his ear was for ever deaf to the voice of his favourite child, who now knelt before him to implore his last blessing. There he sat, fixed, taking it in, as he had said, through the pores.

Ah! was it a good deed for a young man but now beginning the battle of life? Was it a deed on which he could look back with comfort in his last days?

But we will not weary the reader, nor occupy his time uselessly in making remarks upon conduct which will speak for itself.

To our tale.

Looking up at the stalactite roof above, Job saw with horror that it was gradually melting. To remove his father and admit the air, was to let in the water.

The sun acting externally upon the surface had rotted the cliff above; it wanted but the exclusion of the air underneath to set the crumbling mass in one steady blaze.

He was alone! It was a maddening thought.

ALONE!

Was there no hope?

No chance of escape?

Yes—one.

ONE ! ! !

For through a fissure in the lurid rock above he now distinctly saw, as it were, a gigantic iron hand swinging forwards and backwards, as if in search of prey.

It came nearer, nearer, lower, lower, within his reach. Leaping upwards, he——

CHAPTER III.

EAPING upwards, he clutched the iron hand.

A grapnel, a huge grapnel!

Retaining a firm hold upon his preserver, Job looked towards the sky gratefully.

It was a balloon streaming calmly away towards the horizon.

To climb into the car and throw out its two occupants, who were at the moment engaged upon scientific computations, was to Job Friestlor the work of a second.

"My poor father!" sighed the young man, for now that the first excitement was over, he had time to give a thought to others. The old man had been *so* proud of him. He had often prophesied his rise in the world. "And here I am," said Job to himself, smiling sadly.

Still his situation was too critical for him to indulge in any maudlin sentimentality.

"What have we here!" he exclaimed, kicking his foot against a box lying at the bottom of the car.

The car was filled with chests of gold, bullion, and silver coins. Besides these there were tin boxes labelled with names and initials, containing title-deeds, policies, wills,

shares in various companies, and blank cheques with signatures attached.

The balloon had evidently belonged to two fraudulent solicitors, who were escaping from justice.

They had met, as we have seen, with a fate richly merited. We shall hear of them no more.*

Night came on. He was alone floating over the silent ocean.

"Where am I?" was his first thought.

He knew the Great Bear by sight, and this knowledge he felt would now be of infinite service to him if he could only see that constellation.

At last. The Great Bear.

He recollected how he had heard of mariners before the invention of rudders, guiding themselves entirely by the Great Bear, and he wondered how they had done it.

Then he burst into a loud chant, waking the sea-birds on the ocean's bosom.

Twinkle, twinkle,
Little star!
How I wonder,
What you are!

Then the words seemed to fly from him, and others came into his mouth, and he made wild rhymes, singing as if "star" rhymed with "balloon;" then he ran his fingers up and down imaginary scales on the piano, as he had been wont to do in his old fisherman's home, when, as a boy, he

* *Foot Note.*—Some of the Authors say we shall hear of them again. (*Signed by six of them.*)

had played to his father after their late dinner. He then broke open a box of legal documents, and jumping in among them bathed himself as it were with deeds, scattering them wildly right and left of the car.

Then the strange idea came across him that he was Convocation, and he tried to shut down the lid upon himself. * * * Then followed a second of acute consciousness.

He was going mad : he knew it now—too late !

The paroxysm again.

In another hour the full moon was shining down upon a helpless idiot, sticking pins into the balloon, which was streaming slowly away towards the horizon.

Suddenly he jumped up, and with a wild laugh struck a match.

He applied it, thoughtfully, to the neck of the balloon.

At this moment his reason resumed its functions.

The fire was spreading !

Was all this treasure to be lost ?

Ha ! The parachute.

Lading it as quickly as possible, he lowered it from the car.

The fire ! THE FIRE ! !

Two large seagulls flew against the car.

He caught them both. Then tying the parachute thus weighted, to his feet, and holding a fluttering bird in either hand, he bit through the last cord that bound him to the flaming monster. One loud report, and as the smoke cleared ——

* * * * * *

The parachute descended safely, landing its cargo upon a Benician Island.

An old boatman and his daughter found the wanderer on the shore.

The boatman's name was Martin.

His daughter was known as Elizabeth.

CHAPTER IV.

*** IXTEEN years * afterwards.

In the pleasantest room of the pleasantest house in one of the Benician Islands, built in the Gothic style upon the crater of an apparently extinct volcano, sat an elderly man and a young lady.

"Mr. Piel Dornton † will be here this evening, to sign the contract," observed Lieutenant Marchmont ‡ to his niece Grace.

* *Sixteen years.* Six of the Authors wish to state that they were totally against such an absurd interval. What's got to be done they would undertake to bring about in seven. So they've told the Directors and the Editor.

† The Directors repeat that they have the greatest possible confidence in the Editor's good sense, but they did *not* think that he would have allowed such a name as this to be given to the hero of the Novel.

Editor's Note to the above.—He is *not* the hero.

Authors' Note (*by a majority*). Yes, he is.

Note of Authors, in a large minority. No, he is not.

Note.—The Editor trusts to the good sense, gentlemanly feeling, and kindly forbearance of all concerned to prevent a rupture. From the MS. in his possession he thought it was the hero.

‡ Marchmont is thought by all the company a good name. But as there was great disagreement upon the question of his rank, and whether he should be in the Army or Navy, it was thought better to make him a

"Will he?" replied Grace, her beautiful countenance suffused with blushes.

"Will he?" thundered the Lieutenant, who was an old irascible Peninsular hero, and brooked neither questioning nor doubt.

In a second something flew from his hand, and whirring past his niece's ear, within an inch of her golden hair, was dashed into a thousand fragments against the mantelpiece.

It was the tea-cup.*

Her eye darkened for a moment, where a splint from the crockery had struck her, but she soon recovered her good humour, and playfully taking up the classic urn, poured the contents upon her uncle's head.

He smiled.

"The sooner the better," she returned, replying to his observation about Mr. Piel Dornton.

"*Sooner or later*" was the warrior's innocent, but somewhat homely repartee.

Lieutenant, an office which belongs to both services, and it was finally determined that the uniform should be left to the discretion of the artist. *Signed by Editor, Authors, and Directors.*

Also to avoid all description of Miss Grace, his niece, she also shall be an artistic creation, as the Authors and Editor feel sure they can trust implicitly to the good faith, gentlemanly feeling, and good taste of the Artistic staff engaged, not to play the fool.

Editor to all the Authors.—I don't think I shall have any illustrations. But we'll see. *Ed.*

* *Foot Note.*—A few of the Authors remember this incident in the farce of *Box and Cox*. Being put to the vote it was allowed to remain by a majority of one. The Editor does hope he may rely upon the good feeling, forbearance, &c., &c.

Grace felt the inuendo, though she said nothing at the moment; but years after, this dwelt in her memory, and the poignant satire embittered the otherwise happy hours of her young life.

Their house, better furnished than any other in the island, had been carefully fitted up with dumb bells, so as not to disturb the Lieutenant's repose, who was something of an invalid.

She sounded, and an intelligent Boomerang entered the room.

"Clear away," she said, addressing him in his own language.

The Boomerang, a fine handsome fellow, regarded his young mistress with an expression of unutterable melancholy, and commenced his evening's work, using his feet like hands, with a dexterity which only early education could have given him.

Sometimes as she cast down her eyes, the poor Boomerang was sighing at her feet.

While these domestic arrangements are being carried out, let us say a few words about Mr. Piel Dornton.

The Rev. Piel Dornton had been in the island for nearly sixteen years. He was very rich. He had enormous feet and hands: no one knew how they had been acquired. He had no relations; that is in the island; nor did he speak of any one connected with him as existing elsewhere. He was unmarried; at least he had always given out as much. In build he was if anything somewhat above the middle height, with a strong leaning towards corpulency, which in a man of

twice his stature, and of a less emaciated appearance, would have been unnoticed, or would have passed for an evident mark of good breeding; but in Dornton it led the shrewd external observer to a wrong estimate of a character which was in other respects amiable, though perhaps a little too reserved for his associates. Generally, and among those of the other sex especially, his coleopterous propensities were the theme of unbounded admiration.

On his arrival in the island he had announced himself as a clergyman, and the good bishop, having immediately collated and inducted him, subsequently, gave him letters of introduction to all the most savage tribes, among whom the proficiency of the new minister upon the harp of Ancient Judah was to have been soon turned to account by the astute prelate.

But for one person.

GRACE MARCHMONT?*

Or another?

Was Grace always in his thoughts? Perhaps.

* The Author, who wished this tale to be a Poem, in Seven Books, using his liberty of publishing a note, begs to record his own conviction that this is the place for a song. Besides mention having just been made of the harp, what fitter opportunity can present itself? Again, "Marchmont" rhymes with "parchment" sufficiently for all practical purposes.

Editor's Note.—The Editor, with the other Authors and Directors, has promised that a song *shall* be put in on the first opportunity. The Editor and the rest reserve to themselves the right of judging when such opportunity occurs. But at the same time the Editor does really hope he may depend upon the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly note of all concerned, &c., &c. (*vide previous note*).

Or any other Woman?

Rising from his solitary meal, the Clergyman said "Grace," after dinner, to himself, and walked down towards the shore.

It was the cheapest and shortest route to the Lieutenant's house.

"Why give more?" he asked himself, as he descended the steep.

Footsteps behind him ! !

He peered over the ledge of the rock ; not a soul.

Taking from his neck the badge of his calling, he paid it out over the cliff. When it had reached downwards, some two hundred feet or so, he carefully fastened it to the stem of an old tree.

Chuckling to himself, the clergyman readjusted what remained of his white tie, and walked slowly on.

No footsteps this time, but a young man in a boat.

The Rev. Piel Dornton shuddered.

"Bah !" he muttered to himself, "this is cowardice !" and filling a tumbler of brandy from a magnum, which he invariably carried in his breast-pocket, he drank it off.

"So," he said, "Calmer now. Calmer."

He could read two names on the boat. "The *Penguin*, by Joseph."

Slowly he drew forth a pistol, and pointing it steadily at the oarsman, took such sure and certain aim——

CHAPTER V.

LOWLY he drew forth a pistol, and pointing it steadily at the oarsman, took such sure and certain aim as would have undoubtedly terminated Joseph's existence, but that it was unloaded.

It flashed across his memory now that he had been at the Episcopal Palace in the early morning and there had seen

The bishop drawing a charge.

Little had he then thought how it would affect his after career.

The man in the boat, Joseph, looked up on hearing the snap of the trigger.

"*Pas pour Joseph!*"* he sang out in a clear tenor voice, touching his cap reverently to the ecclesiastic, and at the same time giving a strong pull with both sculls, which caused him to disappear within the water-cave.

The clergyman remained wrapped in meditation.

"*Vidi te!*" said a voice behind him, and turning, he recognised the kindly old bishop looking at him slily through

* They do not talk French in Benicia.—*Director's Note.*
If the Directors interfere, we will not write any more.—*Authors' Note.*
The Editor *does* hope that the kindly feeling, &c., &c. (*as before*).

the crook of his highly ornamented crosier. "*Hamus id! hic est Lictor veniens*," he said, in old monkish Latin.

It was a coast-guardsman coming over the hill.

"Joseph, you have escaped me this time," said Dornton to himself, as he parted with his superior, and wended his way towards Marchmont House.

He could not knock at the door. Strange, he was shy and nervous as a boy in his first love.

He climbed up the conservatory and looked through the top.

By the light of the lamp* he saw her fair form like a bright angelic picture, and he felt a thrill pass through his frame.

Slowly he drew forth the pistol, and took deadly aim.

"Tush," he said to himself, smilingly, "'tis but a mere matter of habit," and replaced the weapon in his tail-coat pocket.

But there was another form close to Grace's.

Whose? The thought was madness. WHOSE FORM?

Dashing through the thin panes of glass which ill served to prevent his entrance, he burst into the room.

What sight met his gaze!

Grace, in full ball costume, lying on the sofa, covering her eyes with her hands, and by her the aged Lieutenant, clutching the poker in his nervous grasp——

Dornton ran forward, and——

* Some of the Authors wish to call this Novel, "Scenes from Clerical Life."

Editor's Note.—They won't, though. *Wait till the End. Then change the title if you like.*—ED.

CHAPTER VI.

ND seized the weapon.

"In my own house!" exclaimed the Lieutenant.

"Never!"

So saying he stirred the fire, which in the Benician Islands becomes a necessity during the July evenings.

"And Grace?" inquired the Clergyman.

"Is well," she replied, going towards the piano.

"Music!" exclaimed the Lieutenant, placing two fingers in his mouth, and giving a shrill whistle.

WHOSE FINGERS?

His own.

She struck a few brilliant chords on the instrument, and then broke into a *Tarantella.*

"Shall we polk?" asked the Clergyman, seizing the Lieutenant round the waist.

"With pleasure," was the answer; and, gracefully curving and bending, they went round the room.

Oh! those happy evenings in Benicia!

"Now for the Contract," exclaimed Grace.

They all seized pens, but before Piel Dornton could affix

his signature a loud report as of a cannonade burst on their ears.

The House divided.

"Smithereens!" exclaimed one of the three. The Lieutenant was the speaker. In another instant the speaker had left the chair. Amidst confused cries

THE HOUSE SUDDENLY ROSE.

"Ha!" cried the Lieutenant, as clutching at his niece, they went up slowly in the air together. "I know!"

"What!" exclaimed the agonized girl.

"The volcano on which our house was built was not extinct —the Architect was wrong."

CHAPTER VII.

FREEDOM.*

ERTAINLY Piel Dornton was in luck. The volcanic eruption which had caused Lieutenant Marchmont's house to be raised from the ground had forced him through the window, whence he fell, the worse for a few bruises, on the velvet lawn in front.

* Resolution carried by a large majority of Authors engaged on this work; viz., "That headings be affixed to every chapter, to be chosen by vote."

Notes. (*a*) Thirteen of the Authors were out of town when this was written, and agreed to leave the description of the voyage, and so forth, in the hands of the remainder, two of whom professed to have travelled all over the globe, and were able to vouch for all their localities. These two were under the control of the other five, among them are two professed naturalists, an archæologist, a geologist, and a pisciculturist. Four of them are members of the Acclimatisation Society, and the two first are Fellows of the Royal Geographical; at least, so they say.

(*b*) We, the Directors, think that the above description is too much like the Child's Noah's ark, but we are loth to interfere with the clear course of the story. Only *do* get on.

(*c*) They are getting on. It's all right. The Boomerang is —— in disguise. Piel Dornton is ——, and altogether it is most interesting as far as I've read.—*Editor.*

To the Authors, from the Editor.—Now, Gentlemen, send in your MSS., the Editor's in the room.

"Fallen on the lawn," the Clergyman said to himself. "That promises well for a bishopric *in futuro*." He knew Latin and spoke it, when nobody was listening.

Marchmont House had disappeared, and with it the Lieutenant and Grace, *but the contract of marriage was still in Piel Dornton's hand.*

Piel looked cautiously round. He was a bold bad man, but even bold bad men sometimes are obliged to look round cautiously. "It was easier for him," he recollected his father saying this, "to look round than to keep square."

At the thought of his father, Dornton paused and murmured, "Still taking it in through the pores. So many years ago. How quickly the time has passed."

His eye fell upon the paper in his hand. The sound awoke him from his reverie.

He walked to his own house, and unlocking a desk which opened with a spring, he drew from a secret drawer a small bottle of black ink, a steel pen, a holder, a sheet of white paper, and an ordinary blotting pad.

Then he lit the fire.

He was evidently uncertain as to his next proceeding.

He rang the bell.

A servant in a large mask and a deep sepulchral voice answered the summons.

Dornton asked if anyone had called, and receiving a reply in the negative, told the man that he was not to be disturbed for the next three hours.

He sat down before the desk, and spread out the contract before him.

To it were affixed the names of Charles Augustus Leonard Marchmont and Grace Marchmont.

What was he doing with that pen, and that black, black ink, which seemed to grow blacker and blacker under the hands of Piel Dornton?

He was writing.

It was a troublesome task apparently, for he laboured at the work slowly and wearily.

The clock-hands passed over the second hour, and still Piel Dornton worked on with the black wicked ink and the hard remorseless steel pen scratching the paper before him.

Had he been less absorbed in his occupation he would have noticed that to the topmost branches of the stately elm in front of his window was fixed a small cradle, which being moved gently to and fro by the summer south wind rocked its occupant as tenderly as if it had been set in motion by the maternal foot. Not that if he had seen it he would have taken much note of the circumstance, it being the common practice of the poorer classes in this part of the world so to dispose of their children when they themselves cannot pay for a nurse during the hours of their daily toil.

Had he known that within that cradle lay an infant, he would have in all probability pulled his blinds down; but as it happened, it entirely escaped his observation.

There lay the little creature, apparently quite content to play with the bells of its plated rattle, and suck the imitation coral.

Yet the child did not shake the bells, but held them in its little hand, grasping them so firmly as to prevent the slightest

sound catching the ears of the anxious writer at the escritoire. Moistening the red-dyed bone between its chubby lips, the infant ever and anon cast a furtive glance towards Piel Dornton.

It was midnight before he had finished.

"The next thing," he said, "is to go to work with a will."

WITH A WILL!

Then he arose from his chair and regarded his work with satisfaction.

"It is worth the risk," he murmured to himself: "it is worth the risk."

CHAPTER VIII.

LOST.

ITH a sharp heavy splash which sent the water up twenty feet high, the house, so singularly detached from its foundations by the volcanic action recorded in our last chapter, fell on the upheaving bosom of the ocean.

The question now was, whether the building would sink or swim.

It was an anxious moment for all three, for the faithful Boomerang who was just entering the room with a lamp when the explosion took place had been carried with them.

In the peculiar construction of their mansion lay their safety. The Architect had been a man of extreme fancy and great ingenuity (he had, indeed, been subsequently recommended to the British Government as a fit and proper person for a sinecure at one of their large establishments—the Hanwell College) and had fashioned the under-flooring of the drawing-room, forming the ceiling of the kitchen, after the manner of the keel of a large boat.

What had always been an eye-sore to Lieutenant Marchmont now proved their salvation. The house floated on the waves, drawing about four feet of water, without the occupants

feeling any more inconvenient motion than they would have experienced on an ordinary sea-voyage.

They were somewhat afraid to open the low French windows, whence they had formerly stepped on to the lawn —and they felt the want of air.

But on the second day they discovered three trap doors in the roof, and the Boomerang having found a saw, in a short space of time with the aid of a few nails and a hammer, joined the three traps together, so that the whole of one side of the sloping roof could now be opened and shut at pleasure:

Fortunately the remains of the tea, with muffins, dry toast and butter, were still upon the table. The Boomerang, who, by the way, had been in their service for nearly fifteen years, was named Nutt—at least so he had always given them to understand—now rose with the occasion, and exhibited a spirit, a determination, and a knowledge which, though it did not strike them at the time, was far above any educational acquirements of the ordinary Boomerang native.

The Lieutenant sat moping in his arm-chair. Grace played a little upon what remained of the piano ; but Nutt assumed the directorship, and at once, as a practical man, portioned out the tea, the dry toast and butter, so as to put them all on allowance for four days. "His religion," he said, merrily, "taught him charity, and he always made allowances for everybody."

So they ate sparingly three crumbs each of toast, two drops a-piece of tea, and then sat on the ledge above, with the half-roof lifted up, and gazed upon the murmuring sea.

She was abstracted, and as the poor Boomerang regarded

her placid features he heard her uttering gently a name—"Piel."

Looking down into the room, he saw the Lieutenant stealthily moving towards the sugar:

In a second he was down silently, and seizing the old man by the wrist, forced him back into his seat.

"Sugar!" gasped the wretched man.

"No," replied Nutt kindly, but firmly, "we must feed equally."

"And," added Grace, nodding to her Uncle, "as to the sugar, if you do not like it you must lump it."

They were the first unkind words she had ever spoken to him. She felt it was necessary, and that upon her resolution now depended their common fate.

A GRACE-FUL

LETTE AT SEA.

[*To face* p. 113.

CHAPTER IX.

A BIRD IN THE HAND.

HEN Grace awoke on the fourth morning she was surprised to find Nutt already up, and apparently engaged in placing lumps of sugar about the roof. In his hand he held a small cruet. To her inquiries, he merely said, "Wait and you will see."

She waited for an hour, and Nutt hearing a slight scream, rushed to her.

"Oh!" she said, "I am very foolish, I know, but an enormous creature flapped up against the side, and took away some of the sugar. There—look—there he is in the water."

Nutt watched the living thing narrowly, and then replied, "I thought as much. That is the Pangofflin, or Mew-pig. It is only seen in the summer in this southern climate, and then but for a month. It is a great delicacy, and is almost if not entirely unknown in England, and the more northern countries. It shows us, moreover, our exact situation. We are," he added, looking cautiously round, "Longitude sixty-seven by two and a half, latitude twenty-eight by ninety, and therefore we cannot be very far distant from the small cluster of islands known as the Parsongkor Daycoovert group. The

cruet which I now hold in my hand contains common table salt. It is an excellent substitute for fire-arms."

Grace was somewhat surprised at this, but urged him to continue his interesting conversation.

The poor Boomerang's eyes glistened at the implied compliment, mastering his emotion with a cotton pocket handkerchief, he proceeded :—

"The sugar which you see I have placed about the roof will serve as a safe bait for the Pangofflins, who will alight and attempt to carry a piece away. That one just now succeeded only on account of your screaming."

"I will be more careful in future," said Grace.

"When a larger one than usual has perched, I shall take the cruet, and extracting a dainty pinch of the saline condiment between my finger and thumb, I shall sprinkle it upon his tail. This operation has a mesmeric effect, the bird staggers, and after a few feeble endeavours to regain his liberty, he falls and dies."

"You speak," exclaimed Grace, in wondering admiration —"you speak, like a book." He was about to say something when,

"There," she exclaimed, suddenly,

"LOOK !"

CHAPTER X.

EDUCATING A PARTY.

NUTT stepped forward, quietly, and in a second more had captured a fine plump Pangofflin, which had perched itself near a lump of sugar.

"You must pluck him," said Nutt, laughingly to Grace.

The Lieutenant looked up for one moment. "You must examine him first, and pluck him afterwards," said the old man.

"He is thinking of his first Army examination, "whispered Grace. "Poor Uncle! The events of the last few days have completely shattered him."

Lieutenant Marchmont was evidently not long for this world.

"The Pangofflin, you will observe, Miss Marchmont," said Nutt, "is something between a pig and a trout, and while it has all the exquisite fat of the turtle, possesses none of the coarseness generally inseparable from the flesh of a dirty feeder."

Grace blushed.

"The tea-pot will serve us for a stew-pan, and while he is being cooked, distil the liquor through the spout into a

tea-cup, which you will find will furnish your Uncle with a nutritious soup.

"Let the stewed Pangofflin stand for an hour, then divide it into six equal parts."

"That will be one for each of us, and three over," said Grace, who was already beginning to show an aptitude for abstruse calculation.

"True," replied Nutt. "One of the other three parts we will use for a different but not less useful purpose."

A groan from the sofa interrupted their conversation at this point.

It was the Lieutenant.

"He cannot last out two days," observed Nutt, after feeling his pulse and looking at his tongue, "However, I will prescribe for him."

So saying, he took one of the chairs, and turning it upside down, commenced unscrewing the little brass wheel on one of the legs.

This wheel he then rubbed gently with his pocket handkerchief, upon which it left a slightly greasy smear.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed, triumphantly, "let us never despair. Your Uncle, unknown to us, has taken the sugar at which the first Pangofflin had a peck, and, as might have been expected, it has not agreed with him. Now for my remedy: each of these little brass wheels contains a certain amount of oil, which from time to time has been rubbed into them, in order to render their transit across the carpet easy; this oil can be extracted, and being placed in a cup, will make excellent medicine for the Lieutenant. In the absence

of a chemist's shop, these little wheel-castors, I think they are termed—will give us the nearest approach we can obtain to

CASTOR OIL.

The Lieutenant groaned.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed Grace, raising her Uncle up in her arms, "or it may be too late."

CHAPTER XI.

WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS.

IEL DORNTON walked towards the window. "It *is* a risk," he repeated, and pressed the papers which he held in his two strong hands.

"There are no witnesses; why not?" he said to himself.

Looking upwards he perceived the cradle: and started.

NO WITNESSES?

"The child is out late," he said, frowning. "Mrs. Dixon should be more careful. How does she know but that a high wind might——"

He paused.

Should he never be free?

The southern breeze which had hitherto rocked the cradle forwards and backwards, was gradually dropping, and in its place was springing up a stronger and sharper blast which, driving down from the north often visits the Benician country, sometimes in its fury tearing up trees, rending rocks, and carrying away men and animals for twenty miles with irresistible violence. This dreaded breeze is called the Azuwos. It was springing up now.

Piel Dornton gently undid the rope by which the cradle was suspended.

The wind blew fiercer.

Piel Dornton rang the bell. "Tell Mrs. Dixon I wish to see her."

With a heavy crash the cradle fell.

In a minute the frantic mother was kneeling by the side of her infant.

"Who has done this?" she exclaimed.

Piel Dornton passed down the garden on his way from the house.

"My dear Mrs. Dixon," he said, in his softest tones; "you left your baby on the top of the tree." She paused and pressed her brow. He continued, quietly, "When the southern wind blows, the cradle is rocked, I know; but when that wind drops, and the Azuwos arises, the cradle, Mrs. Dixon, will fall, then down must inevitably come the cradle, the baby——"

"Aye, Piel Dornton," interrupted the woman, savagely, "AND ALL."

She was kneeling on the grass, with her baby clasped in her arms, and both hands stretched high above her head towards the starry sky.

Piel Dornton, papers in hand, passed on.

"Mary Dixon," he muttered, "you mean mischief."

But for the present, the WILL.

Turning the corner he entered the bank of Messrs. Chekk, Diss, Count, & Co., the great Benicia Agents.

What was he doing there?

CHAPTER XII.

IN BANCO.

HE Clerks received him.

"We were just closing," said old grey-headed Mr. Snagg, the Senior Cashier; "but pray walk in, Mr. Dornton. What can we do for you, sir?"

"Cash this," replied Piel Dornton, presenting a cheque for two million six hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds.

"Will you have it now," inquired Mr. Chekk, "or wait until it is given to you?"

Piel Dornton preferred the former alternative. "I shall also require money for this," he added, presenting a formidable-looking document.

"The signature is a good one," said Mr. Snagg, smiling, "I don't think there'll be much difficulty about that. I will just make a memorandum of the transaction."

So saying the methodical old man drew out a neatly-bound ledger and made the following entry:—

"*Paid to the Rev. Piel Dornton on account of Lieutenant Charles Augustus Leonard Marchmont's cheques to said account, and also on account of the aforesaid Charles Augustus Leonard Marchmont's last will and testament, the sum of*

three million sterling, allowing the present price of Benician stock and discounting the same at $93\frac{3}{8}$."

Here followed the date and the signatures for himself and the partners.

And so Piel Dornton went back to his house the acknowledged heir *of the late* Charles Augustus Leonard Marchmont.

From Directors to Editor.—Why don't you publish opinions of the Press? Puff it, Sir, puff it.

Editor to the Directors.—The Press hasn't expressed any opinions. Don't tell *me* to puff it—you can puff it yourselves. I know my work.

The Editor begs to state he has received numerous offensive letters from the Shareholders. It is not in accordance with the rules to publish them. Let all offensive communications be addressed in future *to the Directors.*

From Artist to Editor.—Dear Sir, when are you going to settle? I've done ten illustrations.

Editor to Artist.—Yes; but they were all too late.

Artist.—Couldn't do them before I had read the chapters. Send me a lot of the novel in advance.

Editor to Artist.—Will mention it to Authors. Yours ever.

CHAPTER XIII.*

FLOATING CAPITAL.

WE must use our privilege as novelists, and leaving Piel Dornton in enjoyment of his ill-gotten gains, return with lightning-thought speed to the Volcano Villa, buoyed upon the broad bosom of the mighty ocean.

While they were thus floating, the Lieutenant was sinking

* *Note.*—An influential minority of the Authors protest against this being the Thirteenth Chapter, it ought to have been a continuation of the Twelfth. Coinciding, however, with the majority in the main idea of the story, they yield upon this point.

* * * The Editor compliments the influential minority upon the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly tone which he hopes will prevent the occurrence of any *contretemps* likely to endanger the success of the thrilling novel now so favourably progressing.

Note.—Three Authors of the Company protest against this sudden end of the Lieutenant's career. They had taken a house in a quiet spot for the last month, on purpose to produce four most effective chapters, giving a detailed account of his lingering illness, the prescriptions, the weather, the anguish of his daughter, her song (by the musical Author who was staying with them), and finally his death, with a last dying speech and confession. On their coming up to town they find that he's been killed. "Sir (to the Editor) this is murder—murder most foul and most unnatural, and most unfair upon us who had been at such expense and trouble. *Why not make him only in a trance and recovered by the sea-water!*"

Editor to the Above.—Gentlemen, you did not leave your address, and we were obliged to get on with the story. When the work is published

fast. Nutt held him up head downwards, beat his hands and feet with hair-brushes, spent hours upon him (as many as he could spare away from the necessary work of navigation) in applying the red-hot poker, as, he confessed a last chance of stirring his fast numbing extremities, all in vain.

Early in the morning of the fifth day at sea the Lieutenant was committed to an ocean grave. They interred him decently.

Nutt said as much of the prayer for the High Court of Parliament as he could recollect from memory, and Grace's clear ringing voice intoned an "Amen" whenever his recollection of the precise words failed him.

Then they sat down and wondered.

Sad as was the Lieutenant's fate it was a providential occurrence, as the cold tea was coming rapidly to the last drop, and even as it was Nutt was obliged to limit their

in three volumes your admirably written chapters will form a valuable and agreeable addition to the literature of the country. But in the meantime, now you have come back to town, the Editor *does* hope that you'll chime in with the present arrangements, and further, that the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly tone of all concerned, will prevent any *contretemps* occurring just when the work is progressing so favourably, and hourly rising in public estimation.

P. S. If the Musical Author will kindly look in between 10 and 4, and sing his composition to the Editor and the Directors they will be delighted to hear it. It is really too good for print, and far above the heads of the general public.

*** Inquiries from Shareholders in the Sensational Novel Company as to the Declaration of Dividends, &c., must be made to the Directors or the Manager. The Shares are going up rapidly, and very few remain to be disposed of to the public. The Editor has a few which he may be prevailed upon to part with by private contract.

allowance of food to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an half an inch of the remaining dry toast per diem for Miss Grace's sustenance, and $\frac{6}{16}$ of the same for himself.

The Pangofflins becoming crafty were no longer to be allured by the saccharine bait which in spite of the ingenious remedies invented by Nutt for his recovery, had proved so fatal to the Lieutenant.

Within the last two days Grace Marchmont had noticed a gradual change coming over the hitherto despised Boomerang.

"His features are softening," said Grace to herself, as she came upon him once fast asleep. "I trust it is no indication of the brain."

His legs and hands caused her no small anxiety.

"And this man," she thought, "is undergoing so much for *me*."

One morning she ventured to ask him if he could tell where they were now?

"Where are we now?" he repeated, gently. "I think I can ascertain the precise spot for you without reference to such geographical charts as unfortunately for us are in the possession of the Admiralty officials in various parts of the world. Have you a thimble?"

She had three still in her work-box, and gave them to him, wondering to what use he would adapt them.

"You see, Miss Marchmont, in this hand I hold a small pellet formed of the dry toast, which I shall subsequently consume for my breakfast. I will merely call upon you to observe that I have nothing concealed in my sleeve, and I need hardly remark that, situated as we are, I am in posses-

sion of no mechanical contrivances, no sort of springs, or false bottoms."

She bowed slightly, in token of acquiescence, and he proceeded.

"I place this tiny pellet upon your work-table, which I see stands sadly in need of repairing, and I hide it for one minute from your view by the simple process of covering it with one of the three thimbles with which you have kindly furnished me. Moving these rapidly from left to right, and again from right to left, I pause for a moment to ask you where, in your opinion the little pellet of toast is at this moment concealed.'

She considered.

At length she replied, with evident hesitation, "Under the centre one."

He lifted up the thimble on the right side. Underneath it lay the pellet.

He tried the experiment several times, and invariably with the same result, varied only by the situation of the toast-pellet in relation to her guess.

"I have taken this means, Miss Marchmont," he said, "to show you how difficult it is to pronounce with certainty upon the position of even so small an object as a toast pellet within a narrowly limited circumference, and therefore, by parity of reasoning, how magnified becomes the difficulty, when its subject is the exact position of two human units within the almost boundless circumference of the vast ocean."

She sat gazing upon him with her large eyes open, in almost childlike reverence of a character so gradually revealed—so new to her. Then she glanced downwards

towards his feet. He interpreted her glance, and answered it.

"They are sea-legs," he said. "I will make you a pair."

Presently he came up from below with a beaming face. "I have discovered our exact position." Grace looked at him inquiringly,

"We are," he said confidently, "HERE!"

It never occurred to her to doubt his assertion for one moment. A week ago she would have resented his proffered opinion as an impertinent outrage.

That day they ate the last of the toast, and drank the remainder of the cold tea.

Towards evening Grace complained of an unsatisfied craving for nutritious food. The flight of the Pangofflins was indeed a loss.

Nutt sat silent for a few minutes. Then he turned to her.

"Will you play on the piano?" he asked.

"I cannot sing the old songs," she replied, "but I will comply with your request."

While she struck the few remaining notes, he was busy fashioning a pin into a hook-shape.

Then he dropped his line into the sea.

"I have no bait," he said, "and your music is now our sole chance. Play something catching."

A tremendous splash and a heave, which, as appeared to her, nearly capsized the frail tenement, caused her to leap from her music-stool in consternation.

"Ah!" she exclaimed in terror. "He has fallen overboard!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"TE CREDO, MEUS PUER!"

The "Adelphi." *

HAT feeling at her heart was it that sent the life's blood coursing from her face, that forced her to lean against a chair for support? *He* was overboard.

Drowned, perhaps!

Neither.

"Do not be afraid," cried the voice of Nutt, reassuring her, "it is a terrific looking-monster, but he will not hurt you."

He had hooked and landed an enormous marine creature, which writhed in grotesque twistings as it opened its jaws, and flapped its fins and tails against the sides of the drawing-room.

"Oh, take him away, he will spoil the furniture," was the feminine cry which rose to her lips; but she immediately checked herself, and holding out her hand to Nutt, said smiling, "Forgive me, I am very foolish, I know."

"We are indeed fortunate in securing such a prize as this, Miss Marchmont," said Nutt, securing the creature from

* *On this motto vide my letter, &c., in notes, p.* 145. *Editor's P.S.*

committing further acts of violence, by holding one of his antennæ, nipped tightly in the forceps of the tongs. "It is the developed Shrimp of the Antipodes, and is known in Southern waters as The Colleen Prawn. Its fin is equal to the most savoury turtle, its flesh just over the ribs nearly approaches in flavour the delicate Southdown, the brain has all the qualities of the most plump partridge, while the 'coral' which comes away in clusters, far excels the plover's eggs, and the tail is far superior to the ordinary apple-tart, upon which so much store is set in more northern climes. When stewed it distils from itself a delicious liquor, scientifically known as Shandegaf. Its presence here shows we are not far from land."

He looked at her: her face was pale, and in another second she would have fallen to the ground but for his support.

"I have talked too much," he said, kindly. "You are hungry."

So saying he at once proceeded to cut from his new acquisition a piece of rich juicy meat. The fire was burning, (he had contrived to keep it perpetually alight, as he had only a few matches, which he knew could not be easily replaced), and placing the teapot upon it, he had in a few minutes cooked sufficient to serve for their meal.

Then they sat down and ate heartily. It was like pork-chops.

After the dinner they drank from the thimbles a portion of the Prawn's Shandegaf, which indeed was hardly less strong than a liqueur.

Then they suffered from indigestion. But neither spoke of their sufferings to the other. So they sailed on for three hours.

Grace was the first to arouse herself.

"If we are so near land, would it not be possible to see it? But," she immediately added, fancying that Nutt was hurt by the insinuation, "we have no telescope."

Nutt, from whose face all traces of the Boomerang native were fast disappearing, looked quickly round.

She watched his movements eagerly. He seized the drawing-hearth broomstick, which could be lengthened or shortened at will, and wrenching off the brush end, pulled it out to its full length, and applied it to his eye.

Grace was in ecstasies. It was indeed just like a telescope. He then explained to her how a glass with water in it possessed magnifying properties, and one without water did not. The first, a tumbler half filled with sea-water, he fixed on the larger end, the handle; the other, a wine-glass partially filled, he attached at right angles to the smaller end where the brush had formerly been.

With this instrument he reconnoitred, for some time unsuccessfully. At length a loud shout escaped him.

"We cannot be far distant from the coast of Benicia," he cried.

She clasped her hands in expectant agitation.

"Through the large end I distinguish the shape of a buoy. On it is some writing. They have only one of this sort to mark the ship line off the Benicia coast, and as I read it—" he began to spell "B. E.—"

She waited in agony.

"It is," he cried. "It is——"

The BENICIA BUOY!

At that moment one of the fearful Atlantic waves, which had for the past five hundred miles been collecting for one vast effort its gigantic force, suddenly——

Note.—The Authors who have undertaken the Piel Dornton part of the present tale—that is as appears to *them* the really interesting and sensational portion—want to know how long it is before they are to come on again. What the (bad word omitted by Editor) do the public care about voyages and travels, and all that sort of thing, what they want is *the* backbone of the tale, the thrilling *plot*. The aforesaid Authors further present their compliments to the Editor, and beg to state that if their Piel Dornton, &c., Chapters in continuation do not appear in the next issue of the periodical they will at once produce it in a separate form in another magazine as *The Blarney Stone*, the principal character being Piel Dornton.

*** *The Editor to the above.*—All right—yours shall appear in next number, I've read it—it's excellent. I think where you make —— fall into the * * * * and * * * * * hangs on to the * * * * * * * is admirable. In the meantime the Editor *does* hope that the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly tone of all concerned will prevent any *contretemps* occurring just as the work is progressing so very favourably.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SYREN'S VOICE.

IEL DORNTON had calculated his chances cleverly; perhaps too cleverly, for it is so difficult for a sharp man of the Dornton stamp to avoid being just a thought too clever for himself. He stretches out his arm to gain his object, but having griped the coveted possession, he overbalances himself and falls. The Rev. Piel Dornton had not yet fallen, but was he overbalancing himself? This was a question for the business conclave which met behind the glass doors in the Banking House of Chekk, Diss, Count, & Co., the great Benicia Agents.

Their decision was that the papers in their hands were correct, and they could find no reason for disputing the legality of the several instruments.

So Piel Dornton was cringed to, and bowed to, and fawned upon by the Benicians, and visiting cards from the wife of the Lord High Admiral, and the Bishop's Lady, down to the last importation into Benician salons, were showered in at the doors and windows of Phlebosco Palace, now the residence of the fortunate clergyman.

On the tenth day after the disappearance of Volcano Villa

with its living freight, it became painfully evident that the Lieutenant and Grace had ceased to exist.

The Rev. Piel Dornton invited the inhabitants to a Masqued Ball, and he himself, as Cupid, was the gayest, and apparently the most light-hearted of all that merry, chattering, brilliant crowd.

"You are so satirical," said Lady Anna Domino, removing her mask in order the more easily and gracefully to apply her lace-embroidered mouchoir to her aristocratically-chiselled nose, a custom which the highly refined though somewhat artificial Benicians invariably adopt on occasions such as we are describing.

"Not to *you*," murmured Piel, looking into her full hazel eyes, whose lids were gradually lowered under his steady gaze.

"But you love some one else," she whispered, turning away her head.

"No; on my soul, no," exclaimed Dornton, passionately. The sound of the waltz came fitfully through the doors.

She was a handsome woman, Lady Anna, and she knew it. Through life, ever since her early impulsive marriage with the dissolute Sir Falsenows Domino, (who *criblé des dettes*, had died, leaving her his entire property) her experience among men of the world had been of the *veni, vidi, vici*, order.

And now, what was this had suddenly come over her? Was she, the charmer, to be charmed at last? Had she, who had made even women's natural enemies, the serpents, dance

to her piping, at length found the serpent who was to pipe to *her* dancing? Where was the fascination? Or was it he who was fascinated after all?

He watched her lying at full length upon the snow-white ottoman beneath the overhanging fuchsias and dainty jessamines; he watched her as she arranged her pink satin dress with its drapery of *moiré antique*, trimmed with the rarest embrocation, seldom applied, except, as now, externally, and he smiled as she threw herself back, reclining upon the damask pillows. A coronet of diamonds, each separate stone far exceeding the Koh-i-Noor, sparkled in her dark hair; rings flashed and coruscated again and again, lighting her taper fingers; small tinkling bells, Benician fashion, sounded from her sandals as she pressed the drawing-room pile, or shook her feet twinklingly, over the edge of the *fauteuil*. Torches of naphtha (for Piel Dornton spared no expense) shed their soft light upon her, and upon the cream-like and rosy tints of the cold frozen ice and small thin wafer cake which she had taken for her refreshment in that pale voluptuous hand.

"I wonder," she said after a little pause, "where Banbury Cross is?"

"Do not talk the world's cant to *me*," said Piel Dornton, suddenly rising and violently kicking over the *ormolu* tables, the lamps, the chairs, and the bigger ornaments in the room. "I know you—beautiful as you are, I know you." He stood by the mantel-piece glaring upon her. Her eyes looking up, met his, and she listened intently. She had never seen him in this mood before. "Tell me," he said, calmly, yet with

firm determination as he flung the velvet stool through the window, "Tell me, why am I here?"

For one moment she, the conqueror, the syren who loved so many to their destruction, felt how she had been trapped, caged, caught.

Piel Dornton rose from the hearth, and coming towards her, clasped her waist in his iron grasp. She was powerless in his hand, and suffered herself to be carried into the ball-room like a child.

The Bishop was bringing the festival to a close by leading the last dance, which, as is the Benician custom, has something in it of the religious element and of the action of worship; the entire movement has its own peculiar music, and is dedicated to one of the Island's patron saints, St. Vitus—the other patron being the guardian of Hospitality, namely, St. Invite-us.

Piel Dornton forced Lady Anna to kneel down, as his ecclesiastical superior removed from his face the white and red colours which had served him for a temporary disguise during the Masque.

"My Lord," exclaimed Piel, seizing the Bishop's hand, "she will be my wife."

"*Bene ego nunquam!*" said the good Bishop, piously. "*Fecisti tu unquam?*"

Piel took a ring from the finger of the fainting Lady Anna, and was preparing to repeat the usual formula after the Bishop, when a slight rustling was heard in the crowd, and a black figure, closely hooded but with two brilliant eyes piercing through the apertures of her mask, stepped forward.

On one arm she supported what was apparently a large oblong shaped bundle.

The disengaged hand she stretched out, and before the bystanders could prevent her ——

CHAPTER XVI.

'ΟΤΣ 'ΟΤΘΗ ΧΑΤΤ;

ANDED to Dornton a letter.

"Who brought this?" he cried, when he had read it.

No one could tell him. It was a black-hooded mask, and she had gone, silently, as she had come.

Lady Anna fainted, and was carried insensible to a fountain, in whose sparkling basin she was tenderly deposited, in the hopes that the cold fresh water would revive her.

"Who will take a message for me?" muttered Dornton to himself, confusedly, "Is there no one I can send?"

As if in answer to his half-spoken thought, a voice from the throng around hissed shrilly, "Me vil."

"Who spoke?" asked Dornton. A small form emerged from the crowd. It was the bundle which the Mysterious Mask had on her arm: a child.

"How old are you?" asked Dornton.

"Fourteen months and a half," was the ready answer.

"The emissary for my purpose," said Piel to himself. A bold bad man cannot act alone; he needs an instrument, a

tool ; rarely do bold bad men find such an one present to their hand as did Piel Dornton now.

"You know the town well?" he inquired, before handing him the note.

"Vev vel," answered the infant.

"Your name?"

"Ditthon ; but they call me Little Bil*lee*."

Had not the ears of Piel Dornton been careless to their own good, he would have recognised in the infant's lisping accents the name of Dixon, and he would in all probability have called to mind the mother's words in the garden, uttered only a few short days ago, "*Down comes the Cradle, The Baby* . . . AND ALL!"

But he heeded not signs and sounds which might have saved him even then.

"Take the letter, Bil*lee*," he said, and gave it to the boy.

"Largethe," urged the child, extending its hand.

"He means Largesse," observed a bystander.

Dornton regarded him curiously for a moment.

"We have met before," he said.

The child's clear upward gaze brought no distinct time or place to his memory, and so dismissing the matter from his thoughts, he threw the urchin a piece of money, and waving back the curious crowd, he pressed his brows over his hat, and bidding them look to the comfort of the Lady Anna, strode from the ball-room, and scattering the pampered menials right and left, touched a secret spring in the wall, which, turning on a pivot, allowed him to pass through, and instantaneously closed behind him.

"At this moment!" he muttered, shaking his clenched fist in impotent rage towards the starry firmament. "To send to me *now!* But no matter!"

Here he thrust his hand into his open vest, and smiled with bitter scorn as he continued, "She shall be mine. Had I risked so much to stop short of my object *now?* Piel Dornton, there is a devil luring thee. What care I? Devil or angel to-night decides her fate and mine, perhaps for ever. So that is well," he said, as he drew a twelve-shooter from his pocket, and examined the priming. "This will enforce, when arguments and cajoleries fail." He trifled with the weapon for a few minutes, firing it off, loading and reloading, aiming at a tree while running, until he appeared satisfied with his own proficiency. Then he paused. What was that? a rustle? He fired into the bushes. With a scream like that of a child, a wild cat bounded forth and was lost to sight in the surrounding gloom.

Piel Dornton, who was an excellent shot, fired again, and the animal fell mortally wounded. "Bah!" exclaimed Piel Dornton, "This is folly. I have many miles to walk ere I reach *her* house. It must be done to-night—to-night! I have sworn it, and it shall be done." He turned out of the public path, and took his way by the Black Pine Wood. Alone.

As he disappeared among the arboriferous productions of a beneficent Nature, a small form emerged from behind a bush, and stole cautiously into the deep darkness of the night.

The diminutive watcher was searching for something. At last he stopped. and examined what appeared to be a shapeless bundle of white fur.

"In my power now," said the strange being to itself, "and he wanted to know if we'd met before. Yeth, Mithter Dornton, and we'll meet again thoon. Ha! Thee!"

The clouds breaking allowed the moon to send her strong bright white light upon the ground, bringing out a tall retreating shadow.

Concealing himself from the receding pedestrian's view by crouching within the deep shade of the shadow-head, and moving on hands and feet evenly with it, Little Billee (for he it was as our readers may have already guessed) closely followed him, dogging his footsteps.

So they descended the hill. One bent on his own cruel selfish purpose, utterly unconscious of the other; the latter with all the concentrated hate and suspicion of an infant's nature, pursuing steadily and marking down his prey.

Once and once only the thought crossed him that a struggle was inevitable, and he clutched his coral more firmly, and hushed the jingling silver bells, which, sounding mournfully in the night wind, fell on Piel Dornton's ear as a warning knell; but he heeded it not, and in his pride and false security strode onward to his fate.

The Benician Island was lulled in repose as Piel Dornton crossed the Common.

The sound of silent steps following him cautiously; surely; onward.

Onward.

Down the hill. Aye, Down the Hill.

To the Directors, from the Authors forming the Sensational Novel Company Limited.

Gentlemen,—It is with sincere regret that we feel ourselves compelled by the strictest sense of duty towards each other, of our mutual interdependency, [*** This word admitted by a majority, and this bracket inserted in justice to the minority] to address you upon a subject which affects in the highest degree the well-being of the Company, the literary *status* of the gentlemen contributors, the health of the Editor [inserted by me—*Ed.*] and the taste of the general public. Gentlemen, according to the published articles of this Company [*Vide* page 84.—*Ed.*] the Directors, the Authors and the Editor, only and solely, individually, and collectively, separately and each for himself or for others associated with him, reserve to himself, to herself [*** An eminent lady novelist has since joined the Company, authoress of *Blabbington Black's Forgery*, *Charlotte's Birds*, &c., &c.—*Ed.*], and to themselves, to HAVE AND TO HOLD in reserve the rights of printing and publishing such notes as "they," the aforesaid, "may deem necessary for the clear explanation of the novel, the benefit of the public at large, and their mutual protection." Now, Gentlemen, we, the undersigned and aforesaid, do beg to call your attention to the constant breaches of this stipulated agreement from time to time on the part of the EDITOR, and especially to the absence of all illustration. Gentlemen, we demand the immediate dismissal of the Editor. If our demand is not instantly complied with, we resign. (Signed by the majority of the Authors, and for the rest.)

The Directors to the Authors.—Gentlemen, we can only repeat that we have the greatest confidence in the Editor's discretion ; we leave the matter entirely in his hands, feeling sure that we can carry on the Company with the present novel to a most successful issue, aided only by the minority who did *not* sign the recent manifesto.

Directors to Editor.—Can't you make capital out of this slight fracas, and puff the novel? Thus: have a bill out headed, "DISMISSAL OF THE EDITOR (THIS DAY)." Puff it, Sir, puff it !

Editor to Directors.—It's your business to puff it. Do it : only

don't play tricks with *my* name, as I am advised that an action for libel will lie.

Editor to the Authors.—In allusion to the above difference which has unfortunately arisen between the literary gentlemen connected with the publication of this *admirably written* novel, and himself, the Editor feels assured that the misunderstanding is of the most trivial and temporary nature, and that, as far as he is personally concerned, he is certain that with the courteous answer of the Directors, the affair will be brought at once to a happy termination,—he, as Editor, explaining to them, that as he holds so many paid-up shares, and also his present position, by distinct written and stamped agreement with the Directors, in return for having promoted the Company, it will be impossible for him to yield to their demand for his dismissal without gross injustice to himself; and finally, he *does most sincerely* hope that he *may* trust to the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly tone of all concerned, to prevent any *contretemps* occurring just as the work is progressing so favourably. Illustrations will be all right.

From Some of the Authors.—The explanation is satisfactory. *Who sent the telegrams?* The telegraph boy who was sent backwards and forwards has not received a single sixpence. His mother, a most respectable person, has called to-day to prefer a charge against nine gentlemen for cruelty in overworking the lad. Justice, Sir, to the aged mother.

Editor's Note.—The Directors will see to this. Gentlemen, pray get on with your thrilling story, as *I* am dying to know whether the Boomerang *does* turn out to be ——. also if Piel Dornton ultimately —— as I supposed, and so on to the end. Once again, the above difficulties being perfectly smoothed and everything settled, let me press upon you most strongly that the Editor *does* hope that the continuation of the good feeling, forbearance, and gentlemanly tone of all concerned will prevent any *contretemps* occurring just as the work is progressing so favourably.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRICK ACT.

EAVING the pinewood forest on his right, Piel Dornton sprang upon his dark horse, which was waiting for him, and dashed rapidly across the broad uneven Common.

Unconscious of observation, he muttered to himself, "So, Piel! richer, feared, aye, and loved! What have I to desire? What remains?" Onward he sped dashing, crashing, through a plantation, as the night wind sighed and the stately trunks* bent to the ground in the soft southern breeze, as though owning in the man their Lord and Master.

"Aye! ye green things," he exclaimed, standing upon his saddle, as he urged his panting mare into a gallop, "bow to *me*, to *me*, who am—ha! ha!" He laughed excitedly, and pressed his hand to his fevered head.

It was a sudden thought, but a good one, for his purpose. The horse was cantering on at an even pace, making the circuit of the Common several times before proceeding, and

* The Directors think that there have been several good opportunities for advertising lost. Advertisements pay very well. *This* is an opportunity lost, so evident, TRUNKS, portmanteaux, &c. [The Editor being bound to publish these notes, publishes the above without comment. —*Ed.*]

giving his rider time for the execution of his rapidly conceived design.

He tore off his coat, waistcoat, and hat, while the horse was still in motion, and throwing them away appeared in the disguise of a marine. Continuing thus for a few minutes, he aimed right and left, as with a gun, and seemed to be defying an enemy.

"No," he said to himself, "this disguise will not do," whereupon lightly humming a tune, which appeared to exhilarate the noble steed that bounded beneath him, he recklessly divested himself of the military uniform, and in less time than it takes to describe, he exposed to view the dress of a sailor, which he had evidently been wearing beneath the other two.

"I can reserve the Apollo for another time," he thought, slightly opening the front of his sailor's shirt, through which it was possible to see the glittering spangles of the Sun-god's costume. "It is enough if I escape detection in this. 'Twas as a sailor I have always wooed her."

"Hi! hi! hi!" Shouting to his mare, and hitting her sharply on the off fetlock he waved his hat aloft, and hoisting a bundle in a pockethandkerchief tied on to the end of a stick, across his shoulder, careered onward.

His delay had enabled Bill*ee* to come up with him; concealing himself under the shadow of the flowing tail, as he had hitherto done in that of his rider's head, the infant followed him with stern purpose, and resolve, taking firmer and surer hold of him at every step.

On the border of the forest Dornton tied his horse up to a

tree. Far off shone a light in the window of a lonely cottage.

"She is there," was all he said.

A gust sweeping the plain, took his light sailor's hat, and throwing it madly from branch to branch, drove it at a fierce pace through the intricacies of the forest; here Piel Dornton followed swiftly, for if he ever could be attached to anything animate or inanimate, he would have been to that now brimless battered hat as it bounded gaily over the moonlit plain which reached for miles in the basin naturally formed by the perpetual landslips, and the overshading pine hills surrounding it. He would not shout, he would not cry for assistance. Onward he hurried. One moment with extended arms to seize the receding form, another prone upon the uneven soil, then with his short curly hair streaming behind him in the breeze, he flew across the open plain. Onward! onward!

A distant murmur fell upon his ear. Louder, louder, the voices of a myriad deep-tongued monsters baying for a victim.

"The Sea!" he cried in terror. "It is the sea!"

Lucid, two-horned, antler-bearing, changeable, vague, wandering, nightly, continuous-by-night, silent, tacit, smiled the daughter of Latona upon the son of Saturn and Ops and brother to Jupiter and Pluto.*

* *Notes.*—The Authors who looked over this description of the ocean erased this description of the moon shining on the sea, and described the fact simply in five words. On an early copy being sent to them for perusal, they find the Editor has restored the passage. Why? —(*Signed.*)

Editor.—Gentlemen, you are only three out of the number, why did

His pace had brought him impetuously to the very verge of the abrupt cliff, when from the door of the cottage a

you erase the passage aforesaid? It was written by a scholar and a poet, the Author, in fact, to whom was promised that he should write a song in this on the first opportunity; failing this, that he should be allowed to indulge in poetic licence. He is a scholar and gentleman, and retains his classic knowledge. He was brought up at Eton and Oxford. A touch here and there gives elegance. I beg the subject may be dropped.

The Authors, the three above-named with others, to the Editor.—Sir, We did not state our reasons, but will. Scholar! pooh!—no more scholar than—well, never mind. "Retained his classic knowledge," you say: you mean, Sir, *retained his old school books*, and makes the barest extracts from them, which are to pass for cultivated scholarship. He was with us, you may recollect, in the country (the humbug! he pretended he must be away in the country to get inspiration!) and we coming upon him unexpectedly found him writing his portion of this work with an old copy of the *Gradus ad Parnassum* before him, open at the article LUNA, to which pray refer, and you will find all his epithets in the original Latin "*Lucida, bicornis, cornegera*," &c., &c. Then turn to article NEPTUNUS, and in the very first line you will find this gentleman's paraphrase word for word. Now, Sir, if we dealt thus with you and the public, what would *you*, what would *they* say? It was this impostor then who wrote those Latin and Greek headings to the Chapters, eh? Gross ignorance, Sir, gross. Again, Sir, as to the heading to Chapter XIV., any schoolboy knows that "*tibi credo*" is the form, or "*In te credo*," not "*Te credo.*" But enough of this.

Editor to the Above.—Gentlemen, the Editor has been imposed upon. The Classic Poet is no longer connected with this Company. The passages complained of were allowed (the Editor is willing to explain how) to remain at the wish of the Directors, upon whom the Musical Poet had called to sing some of his compositions for this work. The Editor *always* thought him a detestable humbug, but does not shrink from admitting that the epithets were admitted as a compromise, so that the Directors and Editor might not in future be obliged to listen to his singing every day, and at every hour between ten and four. However, he has received a certain amount for his shares, and has retired; and now, Gentlemen, the Editor takes the present opportunity of expressing a

female form issued, and throwing herself across the object of his pursuit prevented its being carried forcibly over into the boiling waves beneath.

The first ray of morning light fell on their faces.

The woman raised her arms and screamed. She would have fallen over the cliff had not Dornton caught her in his arms.

"Bess! look up! speak to me!" he cried in an agony.

He knew she had recognised him, but at that moment, yielding to as irresistible an impulse as that which urged the Grecian Matron Hubardé to make osteological search within the closed recess, or the wary Pimannos to entrap the yielding and simple Simonides on his road to the Athenian Fair, or the impulsive Hornerus to dare Dyspepsian dangers * in

strong hope that the good feeling and forbearance, and gentlemanly tone of all concerned will prevent any *contretemps* occurring, just when the work is progressing so admirably.

* The Editor, in answer to numerous queries from the Authors, has great pleasure in announcing that these elegant interpolations, so happily illustrating the situation, are from the pen of the celebrated Authoress who has recently joined this Novel Company (Limited). The Editor is sure that the esteemed member of the Company, the author of the *White Ram*, &c., will be the last person to find fault with the style of the hand which has produced *Canaries of Supplication*, *Shalotte's Inheritance*, *Blabbington Black's Forgery*.

In haste by the Authors to the Editor.—Where are the illustrations?

From the Editor to the Authors, in haste.—Don't know.—*Ed.*

The Horse.—He *was* walking in the last chapter, but as it gives more life to the picture by introducing a horse, the Editor ventured to put him on horseback. It'll go so much better. The Editor regrets having been unable to send a proof with this alteration in it to the Authors, but there wasn't time before publication.—*Ed.*

extracting the solitary fruit of the Plumm-bearing tree,—he pressed his hot lips to her icy cold forehead, and felt such a thrill of pleasure shuddering through his frame as threatened to render his position upon that unguarded ledge every second more dangerous.

He had not noticed it, but by a coincidence he had stopped on the exact spot where some days before he had dropped the white cravat over the edge of the cliff, and it had remained there fluttering in the breeze.

"You are in my power now," he whispered, with concentrated passion in her ear. "Come! your father is dying; I know he will consent; let the past be forgotten. Come! Come!"

He seized her round the waist, but her voice returning, she uttered a piercing shriek, which was suddenly answered from below.

Dornton paused. He was a bold bad man, but even bold, bad men must pause sometimes. The time had come for him.

"It is Joseph," cried the poor girl. "He has heard me, and comes to my assistance."

"Bah!" laughed Dornton, savagely, "he is two hundred feet below the level of the sea, your chickweed-gathering lover; 'twill be dusk again ere he reach us. You are mine! Nay, pretty one, do not struggle."

But he had to exert all his force, for Bess, accustomed to row her father's smack of seventy-eight tons, could put out more than the ordinary strength of a woman. But she was hardly a match for Piel Dornton, who lifting his now un-

resisting burthen far above his head, was offering her his love or instant destruction, which two steps forward would have accomplished, when a hand apparently issuing from the earth, grasped him firmly round the ancle.

Letter from Artist to Editor.—I charge for all you don't use, mind. Get your Directors to start a Gallery, and exhibit my pictures when this (I omit the epithet, *Ed.*) novel is finished. Yours, *Morlstik, Jun.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HAND OF FATE.

HE towering Atlantic wave, whose dizzy height only those who have once surmounted it to gaze upon the lake-like valley beneath, can possibly imagine, seized the devoted house with the hand of a giant, and twirled it into the air, as Nutt had often done with his hat for Grace Marchmont's evening amusement. For one instant she clung to him, but in the next, relaxing her hold, she, with true feminine instinct recollecting that her watch, which played two tunes and struck the quarters, would be most useful to her on some future occasion, wound it up rapidly, securing it tightly by the chain to her waist, and then as her maiden blood rose to her cheeks, pressed both hands firmly upon the skirts of her dress. So she awaited her fate.

Nutt's one thought at that moment was for her.

The huge wave, gathering itself together like a concrete sea-wall careering on the face of the ocean at a rate too fearful for contemplation, began to quiver beneath its own immensity as though trembling under the consciousness of its murderous work.

Ah ! how little do we, sitting by our comfortable firesides, realise such dangers as these ; and, after all, how small, how

little, does this mighty work of nature seem when told on paper. And what is it? A man and woman by themselves unaided, save by their own intelligence, left to battle with a vast Atlantic wave. And not an Atlantic wave only, but one which had rolled itself from one ocean to another, which had glided stealthily round the world's four corners into the broad ocean highway—a double horror, a multiplied power, an Atlantic wave in the Pacific.

The wild wind was its master, driving it onward in the dark night. It sucked in the smaller fish at its base and heaved them up to the top. Some of these Nutt was enabled to catch and place in his pockets.

"She," he said to himself, "likes fish."

What tables and chairs he could reach at the moment he attempted, somewhat unwisely, to seize and secrete about his person, as they were forced through the house window by inner pressure. As he did so he thought to himself how the time might come when she would be glad to sit down upon something, and then *he* would provide the means. Would she be touched at last? Would she at length understand him and read his heart?

A sharp cry from her attracted his attention, but the night was too dark for him to be guided to her, by anything except her voice.

He stretched out his arms, and leant, as he imagined, in her direction.

This action had unforeseen consequences.

The sudden weight, so slight in itself, thus brought to bear more upon one side than the other, destroyed the equilibrium

of the already tottering sea-wall, and shaking for one second as if the course of its fall were still uncertain, it toppled headlong and fell with one great gigantic ruin, and then the sea was calm and tranquil, and the moon shone out as upon a peaceful valley.

Grace, awaking from her stupor, found herself upon dry land. She pressed her hand to her side.

"My watch! thank heaven!" was her first exclamation.

The next instant she thought of the Boomerang.

Yes, where was Nutt?

And the House?

GONE.

She uttered a loud cry. She shouted his name, there was no response. She was on an unknown sea-shore, alone.

Then the roof of the house in which they had suffered so much together drifted in on the tide. In its wake floated a few notes of the old piano from the lower *b* to the upper *c*, reminding her of many happy hours in her Benician home past and gone.

Then she had recourse to true feminine relief: she cried. This was a relief to her. After a while she began to ask herself what *he* would have done had Providence willed him to be in her place then.

She came to the conclusion that her best course was a careful search. This led her to the southern extremity of the island, for she had no doubt it was an island, from seeing water entirely surrounding it, and here she began her work in real earnest.

A magnificent growth of trees of all sizes and descriptions

covered the cliff down to the sea's edge ; it had all the appearance of a carefully preserved and well timbered park, so bountiful had nature been in this respect, and so careful of her bounties.

With a faltering step she approached the confines of the park, and uttered Nutt's name. There was no response; but as she neared the largest tree in the plantation a vague sense of heat well nigh overcame her.

" You are getting warm," said a well-known voice, in tones of deepest anxiety, not two yards distant from her.

" I am," she murmured faintly, " burning," and she stretched out her hand.

In another moment Nutt's strong grasp, as he stepped from behind a large trunk, prevented her falling to the earth.

" Forgive me," he said to her, almost apologetically, " I had but just awoke from a deep sleep, and seeing you approach, my first idea was to recall to your mind the light days of innocent childhood's pleasures, and to conceal myself behind yonder broad-shouldered pine."

" It was scarcely fair," she replied feebly, but with returning strength. " You should have cried 'hoop,' or something to that effect. At first I thought you lost," and the delicate form shuddered. Ah ! what Heaven was this to him ! He would have had her always shuddering, for that one thrill of strong excitement had set his veins on fire, and made his hair stand out rigid in the last red light of the glorious sun.

" Come," said he, playfully, " no more games : it is getting late, and this is our first evening in our new

quarters. We have much to do. What say you, Miss Marchmont, shall we name this group of trees, Seek Plantation ? "

She answered him with an angelic smile, " Call it rather Hide Park."

" Be it so," returned Nutt, " and now to provide for our evening meal, for nothing is left us from the wreck of the old house."

" Except a few bon-bon crackers," said Grace, who had by this time regained her usual composure.

Nutt pondered for a few seconds, then he answered,

" No," he said. " There is not enough in one at a time for a single meal, and I doubt whether in this new climate the saccharine compositions would agree with us. Let us keep them as luxuries, and perhaps I can find a better use for them hereafter."

" Why mayn't I eat them now ? " she asked, pettishly ; " I shall, if I like."

Nutt regarded her in silent, loving, despondency. Who was this strange being who had so enthralled him ? Was this the return for all his untiring patience, his unflagging zeal in her behalf ?

She looked up.

" Forgive me," she said, smiling.

Forgive her ! there was nothing to forgive. So he put the bonbons in his own pocket, and told her that he had a good use in store for them which she should soon know, and, satisfied with this assurance, she put no further questions.

The sun had gone below the horizon, and night, later in

these southern parts than elsewhere, was coming on slowly but surely.

Grace looked at her watch. It played a tune and struck the quarters.

BEDTIME.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE IRON AGE.

UTT, whose whole appearance,* to the astonishment of Miss Marchmont, had gradually lost all its *Boomerang* character, divined her thoughts at once. "You shall have before nightfall," he said, "a house worthy of Hide Park, and," he added, after surveying the island for a few seconds, apparently calculating its internal resources, "every luxury which modern improvements furnish, or the dross of unbounded wealth can purchase."

She watched him in tearful admiration; she devoured him with her eyes. He was so strong, so good, so persevering.

"Now, make haste, she said to him, sharply, "and don't stand gaping there all day."

This inuendo cut him to the quick, but he felt it was deserved, and so he determined to be inactive no longer.

He plunged into the thicket, and almost instantly returned with an enormous tree.

* "Whole appearance" was substituted by the Editor in lieu of "Face, form, features, hands, feet, legs," &c., which you gentlemen had seen fit to foist into this portion of the narrative. This is an answer to the Author's query.—*Ed.*

"What on earth are you going to do with that?" was her question.

"This," he answered, "will be your house. Miss Marchmont, we are indeed fortunate. This is the Plant of the Entire Building. The trunk is in four compartments, and nature has herself made the staircase in a rough and rugged way, only omitting banisters and stair-carpets, which we can easily add. We have but to fix this firmly in the ground and more than half our work is accomplished.

"Stay!" she exclaimed. "Have I not seen at home printed offers for selling an Entire Plant for Building or Manufacturing Purposes?" He nodded assent. "Why," she continued, with her eyes widely opening to the vastness of the idea, "I have seen as much as £100,000 offered for such a Plant."

"You have," said Nutt, "this is it; we are indeed in luck."

He laboured on for half an hour, and had then only got the first floor finished. He stopped for a few moments to gain encouragement from her smile and wipe the perspiration from his own brow. She was thoughtful.

"I *must* help you," she said, presently. "If I could only twist the sand on the sea-shore into bell-ropes—or—or—oh dear, what *can* I do? It will kill me to sit idle."

This was a good healthy sign, and Nutt would not discourage her.

"Well," he said at length, "you can go down to the shore and obtain some of that white and red sea-weed; when dried it will make admirable ornaments for the fire-stoves."

She rose quickly, but as suddenly stopped, and looked

downwards. She had on only the very thinnest white satin shoes, having been in full evening dress when the fierce Atlantic wave swept them on their new career.

"Your poor feet!" he said, tenderly, but with a puzzled air, for he himself was without boots of any sort.

She leant against a small tree, in thought. It bent with her weight and she jumped away from it, fearing that it was about to break, but on her removing the pressure the tree sprang up again into its original place.

She pointed this out to Nutt, who ran to examine the phenomenon. The next instant she saw him raising his hands and shouting like a maniac.

"What is it?" she inquired.

"This, Miss Marchmont," said Nutt, as quietly as his excitement would permit, "is indeed a most opportune discovery. Without it we should have had to undergo much suffering; *with* it we are at once upon our road to comparative ease and luxury even here. The damp of the marsh, the flints of the beach, the unpleasant moisture of the sands, we may, by the aid of this natural provision, alike defy. This is the celebrated Boot-tree."

"I have often heard my poor uncle mention it," she said and a shade of melancholy passed over both their faces, as they remembered the deceased Lieutenant, and thought how fond he would have been of the Boot-tree had he been still alive. Then they came to action.

"Let me take the measure of your foot with this leaf. Thank you. So in the shade. Now," said Nutt, "in another moment you will be fitted."

He gained the top by means of short stunted branches, and selecting the strongest and best small pair from the uppermost boughs, descended triumphantly with them in his hand. "It is the Spring time of year," he said, "and therefore these early boots have elastic sides."

"I'm sorry to hurt your feelings, Mr. Nutt," she said, when after trying one on it had been found to fit admirably, "but they are both rights."

"The rights of woman," said Nutt, playfully; "but," he added, seeing that she looked serious, "there is one left," and he went up aloft again to fetch it, returning as before.

Armed with these, she descended to the sea-shore, while Nutt cut down a few oaks, and having concocted a sort of putty with some earth moistened by the early dew, he commenced soldering the walls together, so as to keep out the draught. His next difficulty was the stair-carpets, and then the door-bell. This last nearly staggered him. While he was meditating this new difficulty, he thought he heard his name called, and looking round sharply, saw nothing. He was certain he heard it repeated feebly. He ran to the edge of the cliff as quickly as he could, for his new boots (he also had plucked a pair of a shinier and harder kind) pinched him sadly, and looking down, he saw what made his blood stagnate with horror, and recede from his thumping heart.

(The Editor is bound by agreement to publish all notes, &c.)

Thirteen Authors engaged on the Grace and Boomerang Department. To Editor.—Why didn't you publish our letter to you last week? Publish it.

This is not the way to talk to an Editor. I don't like it. Alter your tone.—*Ed.* Sent to Authors aforesaid.

From Directors to Editor.—We have been appealed to by Thirteen Authors. Pray comply with their request.

Editor to Directors.—Gentlemen, In accordance with your calm and temperate letter, I will.

Editor to Authors.—The Directors wish your letter published. It was an accident that it was not done before. Everything that your Editor *can* do to forward your views for the general good shall be done ; but do not let there be a feeling of bitterness springing up specially towards your Editor, who would not hurt a fly. And, Gentlemen, you *should* be above underhand reprisals. The Editor with pain alludes to the hamper sent to his Office, labelled Game, and which contained nothing but live frogs. The powdered sugar was fortunately given to the Office boy to put in his tea, and was *not* used by the Editor in whisky-and-water *as advised*. It blew the boy's teacup into atoms, and the spoon struck him a severe blow in the eye. *This* is not *revenge ;* and if it were, it would be unworthy of you. A Gentleman engaged upon the Piel Dornton part of this Work, informs me that you've threatened him with a booby trap if he calls upon any one of you. Now, Gentlemen, under the circumstances I will publish your letter if you still desire it. But the Editor feels sure that by the time it appears you will have reconsidered its terms, and will thank the Editor, with tears in your eyes, for his gentle forethought and calm advice. The Editor knows that you are *all* good, kind-hearted fellows at bottom, and that these little differences do but arise from various views of Art, accidental to the essence of Individual Genius. We shall go very evenly to work in future ; equal chapters being given to each set. And now, Gentlemen, the Editor . . . . . [The Editor was just winding up this address at the moment of going to press, when the following communication arrived :]

From the Thirteen Authors.—Just read proofs. *Ours* is *the* part of the story.

From the Seven.—Seen the proof of next. Good gracious ! Why don't you condense *their* part ? Stick to Piel Dornton. You know the plot was settled on paper briefly thus :—

"Boomerang and Grace should be wrecked out of their house, and should be immediately ——" [The Editor cannot publish the remainder of this, as it reveals the future plot]—and these fellows, the

Geologist, the Naturalists, and the Ornithologists, on your staff are just following out their own fancies, regardless of the plot at all. Stop it at once, or we'll withdraw, and bring out a new Novel, called "*The Captives of Corcyra*," and ruin you.

We are only seven in number, and the others are thirteen. Literary men and Editors fight for less in Paris. We are determined, if we feel the necessity, to call them all out, and commence with you, Sir, as Editor. Six of *us* will fight, and six will be seconds; the seventh is a Doctor. (*Signed, the Seven.*)

Editor to the above, suddenly received.—There is no time to reply. *Must* publish the notes. I know I am bound to do so. But you are joking. I see you are joking. Come, come, I'm as fond—I mean the Editor is as fond of a bit of fun as you are, and he enjoys the joke, only don't push it any further, and let us all dine together with the Directors at Greenwich. Whitebait just in, small and fresh. There, name your day; and now, Gentlemen, the Editor, in closing this correspondence, is sure that he may invariably depend upon the good feeling, the forbearance, and the gentlemanly tone of all concerned, to prevent any *contre-temps* occurring just when the Novel, well written in all parts, and admirably illustrated, is progressing so favourably.

P.S. from all the Authors.—Are there to be any illustrations or not?

From the 'Boomerang and Grace' Authors.—We won't have the Piel Dornton part illustrated, unless our portion is done first.

From the Piel Dornton set.—We won't have the Boomerang illustrations intruded into our part. Illustrate *us*.

Editor.—By post I forward one large illustration representing *all* the characters in the novel up to the present time. Tell me how you like it.

CHAPTER XX.

TIME RUNS ON.

RACE MARCHMONT had sunk in terror upon the ground while an enormous turtle, more than six feet high, and broad in proportion, was standing upon its hinder fins of iron muscle, and was regarding her with a fixed amatory look, which Nutt at once interpreted as in the last degree threatening and dangerous. Poor Grace seemed utterly unable to move, fascinated by the bright twinkling eye of the leering savage monster which had assumed this hostile attitude a few feet from where she was gathering sea-weed. In vain Nutt above tried to distract the attention of the amphibious reptile; then he descended quickly, and taking off one of his new boots, hurled it at the creature's head. With a yell of disappointed love it turned from Miss Marchmont to regard its new antagonist, who was standing on the defensive, hoping to draw any attack upon himself, when the turtle seemed to stagger in his purpose, and instead of attacking Nutt, commenced a slow unwieldy movement, somewhat resembling a portion of the old minuet, swinging its head lazily from left to right, and accompanied by a low gurgling sound, like the half-suppressed laughter of an idiot, terrible to hear

while its eyes rolled with vague inconstancy, dwelling upon no fixed object.

Nutt saw at once what was the matter.

"I have read of such cases," he explained to Miss Marchmont, who, pale and trembling, was now by his side.

"The turtle is either mad, or simply an idiot. The head you can see from here is very soft. With one blow from a switch," here he cut one from a neighbouring tree by the aid of a blade of grass, which he had fitted to an agate handle, "I can despatch the fellow. He will be very good eating."

But at the sight of the switch the turtle suddenly reeled and fell, dead. It was so sudden and strange, that Nutt could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses.

"The turtle saw the stick and expired from fright," said Grace; "so much is evident."

"Nature, Miss Marchmont," answered Nutt, "never acts without a reason, however distant the motive power may be from our present vision, however obscure the cause of the visible result may be. In this case I think I have traced the effect to its proper cause. This huge turtle has been doubtless the parent of a vast family, all destined for the food of man, all in due time consumed as soon as they left their mother's care. Boats may have come sufficiently near here to have effected their capture, and if once taken to England, few of the tribe have ever been able to return. But those few what tales to tell, what names to mention (for animals have their own method of communication), what horrors to recount in connection with those names! Would not the words City of London, Alderman, Lord Mayor, be a

lesson to the surviving mother. Undoubtedly then she swooned and died on seeing that the switch with which I had armed myself was——" he hesitated.

"What? I long to know what?" exclaimed Grace, anxiously.

"BIRCH," replied Nutt.

This led to further conversation, and then Grace asked him if he thought anybody had ever been there before them. He was silent for a considerable time, but on her assuring him that it was not meant as a conundrum, he answered,—

"You asked me if I had any reason to believe that any one had ever been here before. I have." And he showed her certain indications of a building of some sort having once stood on this very spot.

What was remarkable and most puzzling about it was the indentations of apparently two wings, one on either side of what seemed to have been a hut.

"It has evidently sunk here," observed Nutt, "in some strong convulsion of Nature, probably dating back as far as the Diluvian period."

Grace was silent. Then she said slowly, "I know what it was. Trace its form. These which you think were wings, were *wheels*."

"A carriage," exclaimed Nutt, in utter astonishment at the deduction.

"No," answered Grace, gravely; "has nothing wheels except a carriage?"

He looked at her. His mind was busy suggesting

watches, manufactories, organs, steamers, and as busily rejecting them. Then he said that he would give it up.

She answered slowly and sadly, "A bathing machine."

They were silent awhile, both occupied with the many serious thoughts suggested by this discovery.

Presently the bass voice gave utterance. "This was," it said solemnly, "perhaps the Margate of the ancient world, the Scarborough or Brighton of the ante-diluvian period. Here, perhaps, on the very spot where we now stand Ethiopia's swarthy sons have attuned their lays; nay more, may not the Original Bones lie even now beneath our feet? Here the earliest ancestors of the human race may have buried one another in the shingle, or filling their little pails with wet sand, have trotted to and fro with wooden spades upon its yellow surface."

At last Grace broke the silence which followed these observations. "Dinner!" she exclaimed.

A voice within him responded to the call, and he put forth all his energies to secure the best repast the island could afford.

His bill of fare was turtle fins, turtle soup, whitebait, *soupe à la rain*, boiled mutton and caper sauce. *pommes de terre frites*, omelet of turtle's eggs, salad, cheese of the island, and sardines.

To the first part of this banquet the deceased turtle contributed its share. The Whitebait Nutt found in the creek near at hand, also the sardines; but these last were more difficult to secure, as upon the approach of man, with an instinctive cunning, they packed themselves away in their

natural tin cases, and, but for their lying too closely to allow of action, would have in this manner eluded his grasp. The soup was of a light, thin, clear nature, of which a little drop went a considerable way. The mutton was easily obtained, for Nutt ascending the cliff found a fine fat long-haired sheep quietly browsing on the pasture land, which he immediately slaughtered, and gave to Grace to boil in the turtle-shell which he had ingeniously fashioned into a saucepan ; then he went outside the house, cut some capers, and returned.

There was some difficulty about the fire at first, but Nutt soon showed Miss Marchmont how by compressing sea-water between the hands until all the noxious gases have evaporated, the residue of carbonic can be at once applied to sticks for the purpose of ignition. On the first opportunity he explained to her further how the same process on a larger scale could be with equal success applied to river water.

"Then," said Grace, "it is not impossible to set a river on fire?"

"By no means," answered Nutt, "provided the water will burn. But there are many contingencies which might prevent an inexperienced hand from attaining its object. However, our present task is with our dinner."

He had luckily caught one of the numerous corkscrew fish, with which the creeks abounded, and having fixed his proboscis firmly into a corked bottle, Nutt showed Miss Marchmont how the fish with the leverage of his tail could speedily open their modest bottle of St. Æmilion. Grace,

who appeared to have unknown resources at her command—

Fœmina multa facere scit,

offered before and during the meal to give Nutt pepper; but he declined it on account of the trouble it would have caused her. The turtle's eggs were delicious. The salad made from the rare grasses of the island excellent, and a whale happening to swim within stone's throw of the island served them (for he was soon dispatched by Nutt) with oil enough, when gently strained through a cullender of dried grass, interwoven with twigs, for six weeks' salad and a month's lamps; but this latter was not required, as they found gas on the island in large quantities, the pipes being naturally formed by hollow bamboo canes from tree to tree and rock to rock, which gave on a dark night the effect of a thousand additional lamps lit in the well-wooded inclosure.

During the meal Grace started up, and exclaimed that the last bottle of St. Æmilion had been lost in the wreck of the house.

"Let us look about us," said Nutt, "perhaps we may find a substitute." After a few minutes' search he came back, radiant with smiles, and bearing in his hand a flowering shrub of a most peculiar description. Its roots grew out above ground, deriving apparently its life from the various suckers which shot themselves out into the air while its leaves and branches had spread and flourished underneath the earth, affording shelter to a variety of insects of a genus between avis and scarabæus.

"This will serve us, Miss Marchmont," Nutt said, "for at all events one sort of beverage for this evening. From it I shall distil a sweet and potent spirit, dear to sailors on board ship. It is at once invigorating, supporting, and refreshing."

"Do sailors grow it in Benicia or England?" inquired Grace.

"I am not aware," he answered, "that the plant itself has been much cultivated in either place, though the taste for the liquor obtains in most of our northern civilised countries. The beverage so decocted is entitled rum."

"How strange!" exclaimed Miss Marchmont, as she examined the stem and leaves of Nutt's prize, "how little do we know of nature's provisions! What an extraordinary sample of vegetation!"

"Yes," answered Nutt, "you have now seen the——"

"RUM SHRUB."

After this Nutt made a decoction, and, when they had finished dinner, they sat down happily with a bottle of the new-made liquor between them. Ah! what a paradise to one of them!

As he was raising his glass to his mouth for the fourth time, Grace started up, and seizing his arm——

Authors to Editor.—We've had a meeting, all of us, and we will *not* have that illustration. Hang it, sir, what does the artist mean by sending a room-full of all the characters in one novel? Why, it is merely a waxwork collection. No: if he *can* induce the Directors to speculate in him, separately, let him do so. But he has no more notion of the kind of thing we want than a—— (I omit the simile as being calculated to exasperate.—*Ed.*)

Artist to Editor.—They're a set of idiots, the lot. What *do* they want? I'll tell you, sir. *Sense.* Bah! one of my pictures will be remembered when their trumpery trash is forgotten.

Authors' reply on this last remark.—Yes; but *not till then.*

The Editor publishes all this correspondence as in duty bound, but he does hope that, &c., &c., *as before.*

CHAPTER XXI.

—♦—

AID in a gentle but firm tone, "you have exceeded the allowance you made me by three. Let us be upon an equality," so saying she took the bottle from him, and poured the remainder of the liquid into her own glass. Then he made a fresh decoction of the Rum Shrub. This they drank gratefully, gazing meantime out upon the distant sea. They discoursed at intervals upon all their hairbreadth escapes, but neither hinted at the possibility of their return to the shores they had quitted.

At last Grace said, thoughtfully, more as if considering a problem within herself than addressing an observation to her companion, "Can't intelligence be diffused?"

He stared at her. She repeated her question. Then he made another quart of the beverage they had been drinking, and while she sat there communing with herself, drank it.

Then he began to talk.

"'Th' Lectry Trelgrar wufful 'vention," he began, in a voice so little resembling his own, that it was now *her* turn to stare at him in mute surprise.

He continued. "If we'd lectry Trelgrar here we send say where were, bus sno Leckstrelgrar, thingspossil."

"Thing is *what?*" she inquired, with a look of angelic reproach.

He slowly closed his right eye, which was turned towards her, and shook his head as he repeated, "I shay things spossil."

"'The thing is impossible,' do you mean *that*, Mr. Nutt?" She asked.

He laughed, and then became suddenly grave. He attempted to rise from his chair, which seemed to slip away from under him, and in another moment he was prostrate beneath the table.

He told her afterwards that he then experienced a sweet delirium, which seemed to him like the poetry of motion going the wrong way.

She knelt by his side, being nigh heartbroken. What, after all their toils and danger was it to come to this?

What was she to do?

Had *he* been in *her* place, she thought, what would *he* have done? Certainly not have sat there idle, uselessly bemoaning the past, regardless alike of present and future.

He slept for three hours, and she sat by him, keeping watch. 'Twas all she could do.

At last he woke confused, giddy, with a splitting headache and a dry distasteful tongue.

"Why am I not walking about?" he inquired.

With her ready woman's wit, she replied, "Because you are lying down."

"I will take that for an answer," he said, sadly.

"You are under my orders now," she said, playfully, "and as your doctor, I forbid you to rise."

He wished to hear what prescription this young physician would recommend, and finding that she had none to suggest, he asked her with some curiosity what was that leaf with which she was playing at that moment. She did not know, but was able to tell him that she had gathered it from a tall tree on the Island.

"We are indeed fortunate, Miss Marchmont," said Nutt. "This tree is one of the rare productions of the tropics, and is Nature's own provision for the parched and weary traveller. It was doubtless overhanging a clear running stream of no great depth."

"It was," she answered, unable to restrain her evident admiration of his apparently unlimited resources.

"I thought so," he returned. "It is the Soda-water tree; squeeze one of those lemons, which you will find growing in large quantities close at hand, into a tumbler, with a spoonful of this powdered sugar, which I have luckily preserved in my pocket-book, and it will, I know from experience, produce the desired effect."

She complied with his request, but she saw, though he whistled and hooray'd whenever she approached, that the pain in his head was not yet overcome.

He drank the soda-water and took the lemons, and though still feverish he was enabled by these stimulants to give his mind to the great problem which he had been engaged upon when he fell ill.

In the afternoon she left him for a while, and returned

joyfully with two large dressed crabs which she had found apparently just about to undress themselves (as is their wont, Nutt explained to her, in these hot climates, and therefore she was to esteem herself fortunate in arriving so opportunely) in a cool cave upon the sea-shore.

The sun shone upon them brightly and burningly hot With a portion of Nutt's ingenuity she had plucked up one of the large tropical mushrooms to serve her as a sunshade, while the next size to it she planted carefully over her patient's aching head.

"Do you think," he asked, presently, "that your friends will ever come in search of you?"

"They may," she replied. "But if they do not, it would be pleasant to get somebody to call here, even if only to have a little music in the evening."

She felt, immediately the words were out of her mouth, that the speech was an unkind one. She placed her hand in his, and said simply, "I did not mean that—I am very happy here."

Then he saw his duty plainly, and set himself to do it.

His duty was to let anyone and everyone know that he was with a young lady alone on an island.

He was puzzled, and looked at her inquiringly.

"No cards," she murmured sadly, and she thought to herself, "are not these words in the marriage service?"

"Friends at a distance will please accept this notice," he said, as if in reply to her thinking aloud.

A sharp crisp note from a bird struck on their ears.

Nutt turned, and looking upwards saw a bright red breasted

puffy little bird, not unlike a bull-finch, perched on a branch.

He rose excitedly. "The problem is solved," he cried. "This is the bird for us. The salt! Miss Marchmont, for pity's sake, the salt!"

She brought it to him, and they both approached the bird cautiously. His object was to climb the tree without disturbing the pretty little warbler. It was a difficult matter, but he succeeded to admiration.

Grace Marchmont stood transfixed to the spot in breathless suspense. Another second, and the saline grains were sprinkled sharply upon his tail, and he fell as she had seen the Pangofflins fall under the same influence at sea.

"The bird is stunned, not dead," explained Nutt, "when he wakes up he will be our messenger. He has served numbers of people before this time, and, even in the most civilised countries, where the invention of the Electric Telegraph has in a measure superseded that of writing, the bird is still the vehicle of communication between various parties who find this means most suitable for their purpose."

"And yet," Grace said, "it is not a pigeon."

"It is not, Miss Marchmont, and herein lies its peculiarity. It is——"

"What?"

"A ROUND ROBIN!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.*

THE Boomerang (whom we indeed need no longer distinguish by this name) next proceeded to dry some leaves in the sun, and having in the course of his rambles found a cedar tree and a vein of lead, he at once constructed a couple of pencils, marked respectively H and B, with which, however, he was not satisfied, and so waited patiently until the evening, when he observed to Grace, she would see what she should then and there behold.

As she implored him to let her be of some use, he asked her to gather for him a number of white ferns resembling feathers, while he was engaged in fashioning a kind of awkward boot out of the turtle-fins.

When she returned laden she saw to her surprise that he had fitted these fins on to his feet, and was practising a sort of step which he had often seen the soldiers

* *Congratulatory Note from Editor to Authors.*—Bravo ! you *are* getting on now. Capital heading for chapter. A long pull—I mean a short pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether, and land at last, my boys ! Yours, *Ed.*

Authors' reply.—Glad you like it. We've got about a quarter through the story now.

BEAUTY AND FASHIO

LA MODE INSULAIRE. [*To face* p. 175.

at home doing in the barrack-yard or on the common at drill.

Without a question, for she had implicit trust in his wisdom, she gave him the ferns, and assisted him to tie them, and otherwise fasten them all about his body until he was completely covered. Then he stooped his body, and elevated his neck, and in this guise, and this attitude, repeated the step she had already seen him practising.

"Oh, you old goose!" she exclaimed, with an amused air.

Nutt was delighted. "I have deceived *you*," he said "with this disguise, and if I can deceive the birds who have no reason to guide them to a conclusion, my object will be gained. The step I was practising when you saw me was—

"THE GOOSE STEP."

Then he departed and hid himself like a goose by the side of the small pond, where all such fowl used to come down on an evening, to drink.

At first the birds were somewhat shy of him, and hissed at him as if not liking his performance, but after a while they made friends with him, when indeed he took an unfair advantage of their amiability, and seizing three of them by their necks dragged them from the pond. These supplied him with quills.

Ink was wanting, and, strange to say, once again he returned to the pond, only this time at night.

A fine black swan rewarded his efforts, whose blood furnished him with a rich, clear, indelible ink.

Then they sat down to a delicious supper of stewed eels, fried eels, eels in pies, and eels in every form, which the care and forethought of Grace had provided. After this he wrote these words on the white paper, which he had made of leaves :—

Mr. Nutt and Miss Marchmont present their compliments to Mr. and Mrs. World and his Wife, and will be happy to see them at No. 42 *Longitude and No.* 20 *Latitude, first turning to the right in the Pacific Ocean, any day during this or the next year. Dinners always ready. Supper at* 11. *Ships to set down at Turtle Point, and take up at Cork-screw-fish Corner.*

This they tied to the Round Robin, with which, and its own notes, he flew away.

Then a great notion occurred to Nutt.

He cut down a tree, and out of its trunk he made a strong post. This he set up in the middle of the island. He then told Miss Marchmont to write letters to her various friends, which she did, and he took them to this Post. As he always *passed it*, letters in hand, he could (as indeed he did) on his return tell her that "her letters had *gone by*" this post.

It gave her occupation while Nutt was engaged in his grander effort. The eels for supper had suggested to him a grand, a colossal idea—if it could be only carried out. He procured four black boards and a piece of chalk. These boards he erected in various corners of the island, visible from the ocean. On each of them was written in legible characters,

EEL PIE ISLAND. EEL PIES ALWAYS READY.
REAL TURTLE IN EVERY FORM.
GREEN FAT.
ICED PUNCH AND CHOICE OLD MADEIRA.

*** Parties attended. Turtle sent to any quarter of the Globe. Apply here, on the premises, to Miss Marchmont or Mr. Nutt.

Upon the third day after these had been up Grace drew Nutt's attention to a dusky speck upon the horizon. He gazed anxiously, at last he cried in an excited tone—

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

HE hand which had griped Piel Dornton round the ancle was not to be shaken off easily.

Bess failed to take advantage of his helpless position, and was only too glad to welcome Joseph, as the young man sprang up, through the hole in the earth, from the cavern where he had been secreted. He had been climbing the cliffs, in the pursuit of his usual occupation, when his attention had been arrested by the girl's cry for assistance, and he had at once dashed into the recess and so gained the entrance.

"Piel Dornton," said the young sailor, "this is *my* betrothed. You have riches, no matter how you came by them, you have houses and lands, but dare to injure so much as a hair of the head of this trembling girl, and your sacred calling shall prove no protection to you, for as sure as the Eyrie's eggs are nothing other than the eggs of the Eyrie, so surely will that moment be your last, and by my hand, Piel Dornton!"

The young man's eyes dilated, and his cheek flushed as he gave utterance to his pent-up feelings.

The Clergyman was foiled. He did not at once see his plan of action.

"The old boy," he said, coarsely, "will soon pop off."

Bess was hardened to most things, but this allusion to her father came so sharply and rudely upon her ear, that for a moment she could only attempt to gather his meaning.

"Do you wish to see him?" asked Joseph.

"I do," replied Piel Dornton, savagely. "You shall have his last word, ay, if it be the last he should speak on this earth, for the solemn promise he made me. Your triumph will be short, young man. Come, come!"

They descended the hill.

Still following in his track came the Child of Destiny.

"He is mine! mine!" he whispered to himself.

A light shone from the cottage window, as they tapped at the door.

Piel Dornton grasped his pistol.

In another moment a gaunt spectral form partly appeared from the inner chamber, and rising from the low pallet——

The Authors engaged on this part of the Novel to the Editor.—So *at last* we're going to have an innings. Time for our turn, after all the Shipwrecked House business, which is read by a few, perhaps, though we admit the interest of the tale is not diminished by the intervening Boomerang & Co., simply because the public is waiting for *our* contribution. But we would ask (on seeing the proofs) why don't you put a good heading to this chapter, referring to the one before with which this is connected?

Editor to above.—It shall be done. (Subsequently it was found to be impracticable.) The Editor must confess that he is by no means satisfied with the *style* of the above letter. However, he is sure no harm is meant, and he *does* hope, &c., &c., as before.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BROKEN TIES.

HE old man cried feebly,

"The papers ! the papers !"

Piel Dornton held Joseph by the arm for a moment.

"What papers ?" he inquired.

Joseph answered him with a low laugh and an extension motion of peculiar import which he had learnt when in the Benician militia.

Piel Dornton was a bold bad man, but even bold bad men must sometimes shudder. He shuddered.

Taking the advantage thus offered him, Joseph shook him off and descended the staircase.

On his way out he passed a crouching form in a dark corner. That form was *his* good genius ; it was Dornton's evil genius. The Infant.

It was a rugged and perilous descent down the steepest part of the cliff to where the papers were hidden in a hole in the rock.

He looked over the edge, and saw a white strip fluttering in the breeze. In an instant he had decided.

While Joseph was thus engaged Piel Dornton was alone with Old Martin, for Bess, seeing that her father was unable

any longer to go out fishing for a livelihood (he had always caught one previously in the neighbourhood) had taken his boat, and nets, and bait carefully preserved in moss, and had gone out to win the support which was needed for their evening meal and the next day's dinner.

Piel Dornton was alone with Old Martin.

"The papers!" shouted Piel Dornton in the dying man's ear.

"Don't! Don't!" said Old Martin, who was sinking fast, getting under the bed clothes and kicking feebly.

Seeing this muscular demonstration, Piel Dornton, who, as has already been shown, was something of a physician, at once saw that he was near his last. A bucket was in the room, used probably for the preservation of the fish after they'd been caught: this he carefully removed from within reach of the old man's feet.

"Now then!" he exclaimed, lugging him from underneath the blanket by the hair of his head.

"Don't hurt a poor old man," urged Martin, cowering again from the expected blow.

"I won't!" returned Piel; "but tell me what was in those papers, or I'll choke you."

In vain poor Martin tried to turn it off as a jest; in vain he tried to eke out the few hours intervening before his child's return. Piel Dornton knew his own game too well: he was inexorable.

"The papers," whimpered the venerable invalid, "were left here by my brother's family solicitor, who ran away and was never heard of more. They attest the right of my

daughter to a baronetcy of fifty millions per annum. That is what is the matter."

"You lie!" roared Dornton.

"I don't! indeed I don't," cried the unfortunate old man, disappearing beneath the counterpane just in time to avoid the blow with the fire-shovel which Piel Dornton aimed at his head. Then he fired his pistols about the room and strode from the cottage.

Dogged by his evil genius: at a distance.

He came to the edge, and looked over.

Joseph was below, with his head in the hole, getting something.

In another moment the watcher above saw what it was.

The papers! in *his* hand!

"Give them up!" he shouted.

"Never!" returned Joseph, clinging to the white strip which hung between him and destruction.

The sea beneath roared for its prey.

"One more chance I give you," said Piel, quietly opening a clasp knife.

"I will accept no chances at your hands," replied the brave youth.

Piel Dornton severed the tie.

The sea roared and bounded against the yellow rocks with joy. It had received its prey.

CHAPTER XXV.

NETT PROFIT.

TEN miles out at sea sat Bess Martin laboriously toiling. No fish, except a few of those hybrids between bird of the night and flying-fish, intitled Tittlebats, had come to her net. She thought of her father, she thought of everything and everybody.*

Then she felt a jerk at her floats. The net bobbed, it was as much as she could do to hold it. At last, after much struggling,† she hauled it into the boat. At first, by the light of the crescent moon, it was difficult to see what monstrous creature this was, twirling among the hooks.

At last, as the clouds cleared off, and the moon again shone forth, the night was as clear as a summer's day.

Then she clasped her hands above her head. In the net was a man writhing.

* The Editor apologises for cutting out five pages of mental diagnosis and psychological analysis as to what she was thinking about, *how* she thought and *why* she thought it, as he really *does* want to get to the action. They won't be angry, as he does everything for the best, and therefore he is sure that they will not allow any paltry æsthetical feeling to interfere and cause a breach of that harmony which has been throughout the distinguishing mark of the co-workers on this delightful story.

† *Note by Editor.* – Lengthened description of struggles omitted, for reason above-mentioned. We *must* get on.

"Joseph ! !" she exclaimed.

He tore through the cords which held him, and telling her of Piel Dornton's dastardly attempt, pressed her to his arms,

"Saved ! saved !" she exclaimed.

He would have returned to shore at once with the papers. which they then examined carefully, but unfortunately to very little purpose, neither of them having had those extra advantages of education which include a towel, spoon, and fork, and the alphabet, in at all events its ordinary form, exclusive of capital letters.

They wept ; tears of joy.

Then said she, "You must not return ; he will kill you."

"If he will do that, I will *not* return," he said, boldly.

"But where is a place of safety ?" he asked.

She shook her head.

A light streamed across the ocean.

"Ha !" she exclaimed. "I see it."

"So do I," said Joseph.

In a second it struck them both.

To the Lighthouse !

THE LIGHTHOUSE.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PENDENTE LITE.

HE shut her lover into the Lighthouse and returned.

This proceeding had been watched by Piel Dornton by the aid of his powerful stethoscope.

"She must be mine," he exclaimed. The prospect of the baronetcy and the millions had entirely absorbed him.

But the papers. How to obtain them?

Joseph would not part with them, and without them—— stay! The girl's claim existed—that was a fact, at all events. One set of papers attesting the fact was as good as another.

Old Martin was dead, at least so he believed, and for the first time he regretted an act which had deprived him of the only person capable of giving him any information.

"Just like me," he said to himself, remorsefully. "Always choking, or shooting somebody. I must give it up."

Ah, Piel Dornton, would you could even then have acted upon this call of conscience. But he stifled it.

"The girl!" he said, suddenly. "Bess can tell me."

He ran to the cottage.

She was gone.

He searched the house. Old Martin was gone: not a trace of him.

"I must have shot him, thoroughly," he muttered to himself. "Blown him quite away!"

He was silent for one second: then he fired off a pistol.

Roused by this, he saw but one course before him.

"She has gone to the Lighthouse," he thought, "to join *him*. I can produce papers as good as theirs, ha! ha!" and he laughed fiendishly at the recollection of the documents to which Chekk, Diss, Count & Co. had given their respectable attestation.

'Twas all clear now.

"I can succeed without them," he said, and waved his hat in triumph.

From the shelf he took a box of matches, which would only ignite when you didn't want them, or on other solemn occasions, and he proceeded by the secret pass among the rocks to where his small canoe was always kept, ready, if need were, for instantaneous escape.

Seizing the paddle, which in this boat, being his own property, he always worked himself, he glided noiselessly towards the Lighthouse.

A voice from an upper window asked, "Is that you Bess?"

It was Joseph's, and came as a revelation to him. *She* was not there.

"Will you give me those papers?" he asked, pitching his voice as high as it could go. 'Twas not like Elizabeth's; Love knew the difference.

"Go away!" exclaimed Joseph, with real aversion. "I have nothing for you."

"Then perish," exclaimed Dornton, savagely, and applied a lighted match to the base of the Lighthouse.

Creeping, curling, slowly, certainly upward, the flame took its way.

In and out of the waterbutt, round the stones, through the wainscot, crept the cruel unerring fire.

Joseph instinctively dreaded something, but he only felt a sudden warmth, for which he was unable to account.

Piel Dornton returned to the shore, and landing opposite Phlebosco Palace, summoned his confidential servant.

"Is your mistress within," he asked.

"Lady Anna is asleep, your reverence," was the reply.

"'Tis well," he returned. "Loose the bloodhound."

The confidential servant did so.

"Unmuzzle him," said Piel Dornton.

"My lord," exclaimed the wretched man, "I cannot."

"Obey my behest," thundered his master, "or by heaven——"

The man staggered back. The ball had entered his head.

It was a thoughtless act, and one of which even he, in his calmer moments would not have been guilty.

Aroused by the noise, the Lady Anna stood behind him.

"Piel!" she said, tenderly.

"I cannot stop now," was his rough answer. "I am going out hunting. Don't whine—don't mope—go to——bed."

She looked at him searchingly. So changed! He who owed so much to her, which only they two knew.

But she feared to rupture the one silken cord still between them, and turning on her heel waltzed into the house.

Once within, she opened a secret door, and out stepped the Infant-watcher.

"You say you are devoted to me," she said to the Infant, who bowed. "I believe you: follow him, and let me know the result." The Infant stole out upon the track.

"She is treacherous," said Piel Dornton, as he stood alone in the courtyard. She cannot deceive *me* with these gay steps! I must be free of her." So saying, he unmuzzled the hound, and mounting upon his spotted steed, followed in the track.

Till he came up with Bess: for the hound was sure and safe, and held her till he arrived, when he enticed him away and secured the girl.

"I am thy lover," he hissed in her ear. "I love you madly."

The word made her tremble. She felt the force of this description of his wild and lawless passion.

"I will give thee gems, and jewels, and riches, diamonds, and a title, aye, and a house in the Vast Metropolis far from here, within the shades of square-graced Hanover."

"But Joseph——" she exclaimed, "what of him?"

"Of him!" cried Dornton, "see!"

The sky was illumined with a fearful glow. He gave her his glass, and through it she saw the Lighthouse in flames: in flames which were chasing a running frightened figure with papers in its hands up the iron stairs.

The entire lower part of the Lighthouse was consumed, not

one brick or stone or stick left to tell its fearful tale. Only the upper part remained, which was fast becoming enveloped in the arms of the raging, devouring element. The glass was the old powerful one of Piel's, and brought the object so near that she stopped her ears, lest the perishing creature's cries should pierce them. Then as the flames reached the last point, the very top of the Lighthouse, all beneath having fallen and crumbled entirely away, they saw the form of a man tying some papers to his belt, and as the trembling support gave way beneath his feet, they saw him distinctly, with one tremendous leap, plunge headforemost into the dark and angry sea below.

Then she fainted.

In his power now, placed across his horse to escape detection, he galloped with her to their new destination.

In the meantime strange events were happening in Old Martin's cottage.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BROTHERS.

TRUGGLING, battling manfully with the waves beating upon the lower rocks beneath Old Martin's cottage, came ashore, upon the eventful evening which has occupied the last few chapters, the body of a man, old before his time, grasping in his right hand a bottle and a lump of sugar.

He lay for some seconds extended upon the beach, until another wave more furious than that which had stranded him, turned him and tossed him over, like a giant at play with an empty butter-cask, and giving him as it were a last kick, retired again into his ocean cave, drawing in his breath with a chuckling roar over the broken state of his old toy.

'Twas the sea's last effort, a grand one, and then it began retreating, like a cowardly giant as it was, to go and play with huge ships for shuttlecocks and vast rocks for marbles on the other side of the world.

The form on the beach moved, stretched, and finally sat upright : a bottle in one hand, a lump of sugar in the other.

"Confound them for a couple of idiots ! Commit me to

the sea when they hadn't given themselves or me, for the matter of that, time to know whether I was dead or not!" muttered the figure in a grumbling tone. Then he poured three drops of "stuff," as it was labelled, upon a lump of sugar, and placing the latter in his mouth, soon appeared much invigorated.

"A murrain on the jade!" he exclaimed, trying to rise, "an she hath not given me cramps and agues, and a tertian, it may hap enough to last me till next Martinmas, may I never crush cup or demolish pasty more." *

Rising with some difficulty, the Lieutenant, for, as our readers have probably already divined, it was indeed he, commenced the ascent of the crag overhead.

"Come, Martinmas!" he said to himself, "odd that the name of Martin should occur to me now. My poor brother! But for a quarrel about some wretched property and a title (may all ill light upon such causes of disagreement!) we should have been living together now, and he would perhaps have been an Admiral."

The past seemed like a dream to him: Nutt, Grace, the Pangofflins, the fatal sugar, the Castor oil, all had passed away like the fashions of a kaleidoscope. It was evident to him that while in a trance they had, as we, being truthful historians, have stated in another place, committed him

* *Note.*—The Gentleman among the literary staff who wished the entire tale to be called a Mediæval Romance, and who, under this impression, became a shareholder to a large extent in the Novel Company, has expressed himself sufficiently satisfied by this speech being put into the Lieutenant's mouth as a protest against more modern English and ordinary phrases.—*Ed.*

early on the fifth morning of their floating-house voyage to an ocean grave, which is as much as to say they pitched him over. And we added, "interred him decently;" that is, as it were, turned him out well, as became a faithful niece and attached servant. So as he strode up the crag the thought recurred to him, and he questioned in his heart the treatment he had received at their hands.

"Pitched over! Turned out!" he went on, harping upon these grievances until the balmy air of morn, stealing from the far west, crept in among his grey hairs and whispered peace.

A harmony as from another world seemed round about his head.

He clasped his hands, and with a smiling self-devotion looked upwards as he murmured softly, so softly, to himself,

"A singing! in my ears! Ah! happy childhood!"

Then in reverent spirit he doffed that weather-beaten hat, and moved in a gay and stately manner, reminding the looker-on of the expressive joyous occasion of an old Castilian, whose blue blood would have been stirred by the sight of some wild deeds of chivalry, or some Moorish dogs biting the dust before the sainted banner of Compostella.

A looker-on *did* see him.

An old man above, from a window where he had crept to see "the blessed sun before life ebbed."*

* The Editor, at the request of the authors of the Boomerang portion, who have seen these proofs as per agreement, wishes to know from what poet this quotation is made?

Answer of Authors of the Piel Dornton part.—What! not know

He could only feebly breathe "Hi!"

The sound attracted the Lieutenant's attention.

He ran towards the door.

It was Martin's cottage.

He lifted the latch, and quick as lightning threw the bottle towards the sinking figure, who, guarding his head by the instinct which even men in the last stage have of self-preservation, seized it, and drained it to the dregs.

The morning sun shone in.

"My preserver!" exclaimed old Martin, rushing madly towards the Lieutenant.

"My life preserver!" ejaculated the Lieutenant, feeling in the vest of his uniform.

Within an inch of each other both started back.

"It cannot be!" was their one exclamation.

Then Martin, holding off from the other at a foot's length, stared straight in his face, and asked rapidly,

"Charles Augustus Leonard?"

And the other replied with an interrogatory:

"Matthew Marmaduke Martin?"

The two old men were in each other's arms.

"My brother! my dear brother!" each cried.

In that moment all was forgotten and forgiven. Explanations quickly followed, and Martin, or as we must now call him, Matthew Marmaduke Martin Marchmont, put it clearly to the Lieutenant, his elder brother, how when they had both married, he had never intended to hurt his feelings by taking

that!!! Consult any Member of Parliament in the habit of quoting and *read*, Sir, read.

the girl who should have been his brother Charles's bride ; while a similar assurance on the part of Augustus Leonard soon cleared the veil of doubt and mystery from the heart of the younger, though now old, Martin.

One other explanation.

Charles Leonard asked,

"How is my daughter?"

Old Martin replied, trembling.

"Charles, she thought me dead, a villain has her in his power, but I dare say Joseph, her lover, will find her."

Then it was Old Martin's turn to ask,

"How is *my* daughter?"

"Grace is lost at sea," was the Lieutenant's hurried reply. "The young scapegrace buried me ; but if we take a ship (you want a little change of air, so do I), I dare say we shall find her somewhere about the Pacific."

For each old man had, out of revenge, in early days, stolen the other's daughter when a child ; and the one Grace, had been brought up as Charles Marchmont's niece, as indeed she was ; while the other was called Old Martin's daughter, as indeed she wasn't.

"The first thing then is," said the Lieutenant.

"To get——"

"A SHIP."

* * * * * *

They had been at sea three days,

These two old men.

"Steer to the right, Marmaduke Matthew Martin, will you?" said the Lieutenant.

"I will NOT, Augustus Leonard Charles," was his stern relation's return.

"If you don't," retorted Augustus Leonard, irritably, "I'll break your old head."

"Break my old head, you——"

Angry words might have followed but for the intervention of Commander Bouncer, a veteran Horse Marine, who had been in the service ever since that peculiar branch of it had been first organised, and who had kindly undertaken the conduct of this expedition.

"Hold hard!" said Commander Bouncer.

His ship, by the way, which before was called the *Gemini*, had now been re-christened the *Penelope Anne*, owner, Knox.

"Don't let's have no rumpus," was the Commander's homely advice.

The old men wept in each other's arms.

"Now then," said the Commander, "you two go up aloft, one on the mast-head, 'tother on the jib-boom, and keep a look out."

Away they went up the rigging.

Then they sailed on, the Commander steering.

On the sixth day, the two old men never having moved from their position, the loblolly boy caught a fish which was hauled upon deck. The fish was a flying one apparently, but on opening it they found it had swallowed a small fat bird, whose wings were sticking out.

On this bird was a card of invitation.

It was the Round Robin.

On it was Miss Marchmont's name.

Then the sailors hoorayed for joy, and the Lieutenant gave them three pound six and eightpence halfpenny all round, and entered it all in his private account book with a share of three-quarters of the whole sum down to his brother, to be repaid when he came into his fortune.

Then the Commander liquored up freely, and the two old men wept again in each other's arms.

Then they thought they saw something.

They sailed to the right, according to the direction on the card, and within a few hours, the Commander taking a second and a stiffer glass, made out

EEL PIE ISLAND, AND GREEN FAT.*

Then the sailors cheered the Lieutenant, who bowed courteously from the masthead, and distributed sovereigns among the men, who had already begun to pity the poor old gentleman, as a harmless lunatic not very distantly related to the Flying Dutchman.

So they sailed on. Martin at the prow, Bouncer at the helm, the Lieutenant, like the good Cherub, smiling aloft, and keeping watch on the life of poor Jack below ; then onward sped that good ship, the *Penelope Anne*.

* The Editor compliments the Piel-Dornton-portion Authors on so readily falling in with the romantic notion of the Boomerang Authors. The Editor *does* hope that they'll all work together with a will for the finish, which is now rapidly approaching.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"MINE FOR EVER!"

HE waves which had received Joseph when he leapt from the burning height extinguished such flames as had already caught his dress, and carried him to shore.

Thence, after inquiry at Martin's hut, who had by that time departed with the Lieutenant, he at once betook himself to town, trusting to the information which he was able to gather on the road from those who had seen Piel Dornton galloping towards the metropolis with a fair burden laid across the horse, as to where Bessy was imprisoned.

At first he thought that the best method was to call upon the Lord Chancellor, and obtain some letters dimissory or a mandamus; but on second thoughts he gave up this plan as involving too great a waste of time and money.

He soon began to be aware of several people in disguise following him wherever he went, and once coming round a corner sharply when he was evidently supposed to have gone the other way, he discovered a middle-aged man taking off a false nose and a pair of coloured spectacles.

This alarmed him, and in future he only ventured out at night.

One evening he was in St. James's Park when a gentle-

manly man accosted him, asking him if he wanted "a little dawg."

Something about his interrogator's appearance attracted him, and he was led, contrary to his usual custom, to enter into a conversation with the man, and while so engaged they drew near the small summer-house which was built for the sole use of Royalty some years ago, and which is still a show-place for our country cousins, with its grotesque pictures, its rich velvet-covered sofas, and Dutch mantel-pieces carved over with the conquests of the Regent, a special attraction perhaps being that the entrance is gratis, and it can only be seen on certain days in the year, such days being, among others, if we remember right, the twenty-ninth of September, the first of April, the glorious thirty-first of June, and the annual commemoration on the same day in November.

Hence it was not astonishing that Joseph, new to London as he was, should have expressed his curiosity to visit the interior of the Royal Arbour.

The man had the pass-key and admitted him. Joseph sat down to admire wonders in art quite new to him.

It was a hot day, and he complained of thirst. His new acquaintance, who appeared to be a sort of a metropolitan farmer, offered to procure him a delicious draught of curds and whey straight from the cow.

Joseph accepted, and in another second he was alone.

He felt in his pocket for the papers, and cursing his own stupidity in not having secreted them carefully before, he now,

with a dim intuitive perception of coming danger, sewed them into the heels of his boots.

Scarcely had he taken this precaution when the man reappeared, bearing a bowl of the grateful beverage.

After this Joseph knew no more. He drank, and fell, insensible.

The full-length portrait of the Ranger opened, and a tall man in a mask appeared, accompanied by two others in cloaks.

"Bear him away at once," said the tallest of the masks, in a tone of imperious command.

"Where to, Master Dornton?" inquired the man who had administered the potion.

"Silence, fool!" thundered Dornton, for the Mask was he. "Your incautious folly may ruin us."

"I beg your honour's pardon," replied the man, surlily.

"Hold your confounded tongue, Jeremy," said the younger and shorter Mask, "if you can, or I'll shoot you as I would a dog."

"Nay," interposed the third, who was stouter and of a more noble bearing. "Poor Jeremy means no harm. What say you, Captain Dornton, whither shall the carrion be borne?"

Piel Dornton paused, then in a gloomy voice he gave the command—

"To the Black Mine of Cwmdgrwrr. Away!"

They bore his body among them, Piel Dornton controlling their movements with a sixteen-chambered revolver.

which he ever and anon pointed from one to another as occasion seemed to require.

To the Black Mine of Cwmdgrwrr, in Cornwall.

Then, as they closed the door and departed, he threw aside his disguise.

"I breathe again," he cried. "Mine! Mine for ever!"

Then he went to Hanover Square.

HANOVER SQUARE!!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BLUSH ROSE PATTERN.

N an elegant apartment in Hanover Square sat Elizabeth, the supposed daughter of Old Martin. She was a prisoner, to all intents and purposes a prisoner, as much as the statue of George Canning, which looked sadly down upon the ancient pump below, as if, though they had both been there for years, no one had ever yet had the civility to ask him to take a drop.

Blackly looked the statue on poor Bessy as she walked to the window.

She tried to amuse herself with books ; but she could not read. The piano was her only resource : she was entirely ignorant of the practical science of music, and did not know one note from another, but she swept her hands indiscriminately over the keys, and made such music as perhaps few, even proficient in the art, could have heard unmoved.

Then she surveyed the apartment. It was a gorgeously furnished room. Chairs of various ornamentation, with figures of sea gods and small fishes stood out in bold relief, showing the seats to have been constructed less for utilitarian than decorative purposes.

The carpet was a rich heavy cut pile of a strange pattern.

In the centre was a large circle, and in the centre of this ring a blush rose.

This attracted her attention, and though she could not in the least understand the train of thought, she could not help connecting this rose somehow or another with the memory of her, to her, lost Joseph.

The door opened, and Piel Dornton, in an evening dress of the height of fashion, with large white tie, high collars and tail coat that swept the floor, entered, gaily.

"Do not approach me," said Bessy, flying to the bell-rope.

"Nay, pretty flutterer," said Piel, smiling, "the bells will not serve thee any more than will those they summon. They are dummies."

"But your servants?" inquired Bess, sharply.

"I have none here but dumb-waiters," was the cold cutting response. "Come," he continued, "enough of this prudery. Life was made for love and pleasure; see where the banquet is prepared," and drawing aside a heavy drapery, he discovered to her astonished gaze a table covered with a profusion of delicacies, including nuts from Brazil, and oranges from sweet Seville, with bottles of the richest home-made wines and ices, which could not have cost less than one penny each. Then soft music began to play, and Piel watched its effect upon her with evident satisfaction.

She permitted him to take her hand.

To lead her towards the banquet.

She trembled: soft aromatic vapours were wafted across the room, and she sank upon a sofa, feeling that her will was becoming powerless in the hands of this terrible being.

"Joseph!" she murmured.

"Bah!" exclaimed Piel. "Think not of him. He has neglected you: he is toying at this moment with some lead-begrimed miner's daughter."

"Has he indeed sunk so low?" asked, in a subdued tone, Bess, whose last remembrance of her lover was as he leapt from the burning Lighthouse.

"He has," replied Piel Dornton, feeling that the fewer words he used the more powerful would be their force.

"So much beneath my level?" she continued, more to herself than him.

"Sixteen thousand feet beneath the level of the sea," returned Piel, gaily. "Come, he is unworthy of you. To the banquet. Let us drink his health." So saying, he filled a jewelled goblet to the brim, and as the beads sparkled and twinkled on the bosom of the wine of Ginger, he cried aloud, "Joseph, to you I drink: gallant knight, who would protect thy mistress! ha! ha! Joseph, upon my word, I should like to see you here!"

"YOU SHALL!" exclaimed a voice. It came apparently from

The Blush Rose in the centre of the Carpet.

In another instant the pattern had opened, and shot up by some unseen force, Joseph stood before them.

Dornton discharged all his barrels at him as he rose, but with such violence was the impetus from below given that Joseph passed through the air almost to the ceiling, and down again, before the practised marksman's eye could

settle upon any one point where he could, with anything like certainty, direct his aim.

Bessy ran to him, and clung to him, in his dirty miner's dress as he was.

"Piel Dornton, I come to fetch my bride. Do not stir a step—let us understand each other. Dornton listened doggedly.

"You want the papers which I possess."

"I do."

"Good : you shall have them."

"How?"

"No matter."

"Where?"

"Here."

"Who?"

"I."

"Stay."

"Yes."

"WHEN?"

"NOW!"

"Or Wait——

"Till You get them?"

"No."

"There."

"Ah!"

And with this he drew from his boots the long coveted prize. Piel tore them open, and it was evident that he had immediately hit upon an important discovery.

"Is this true?" he asked.

"It is?"

"What?" asked Bess.

"No matter," replied Joseph.

"Yes, it *does* matter," answered Piel, "*I* will tell her. *You are* NOT *the Heiress to the Baronetcy, and will* NOT *come* into the *Thirteen Million.*"

"Who said I would?" asked Bess, incredulously.

"He thought so," explained Joseph. "And, do you know more than this, you are not

"Old Martin's daughter."

Bess fainted.

"I leave her in your hands," said Piel, hastily. "Take her and be happy. There is a supper and excellent wine, and gold pins for the crustacea. My work lies in another place."

Joseph drew back from his proffered hand, and cursing the Miner's pride, he strode from the room.

When Bessy revived he told her how he had been immured in a mine in Cornwall, and how he had dug his way, wearing out his hands and teeth for her, until he had found the subterranean route to her present abode.

Then he took a bath, and having discovered a rich suit of clothes, he returned to her gaily.

When she heard that she was the daughter of Lieutenant Marchmont, she at once proposed to find him out, and join him and her sister.

"Or, if not" she said to Joseph, "that bold bad man will marry her, as he has already tried to marry me."

"You are right: at any cost we will go."

So these two set out upon their journey, and finding from inquiry at the various coasts that Old Martin, who was very well known everywhere, had sailed away with a strange gentleman (for Lieutenant Marchmont, from his long residence in Benicia, had been quite forgotten by the good inhabitants of the fishing villages), they took the first steamer, leaving England, for Captain Bouncer's course, which he had declared before sailing to the look-out clerk at the Storm Signal Office. They sailed in haste, with all steam up, in the wake of the good ship, *Penelope Anne.*

While she was getting under weigh the partners in the bank of Check, Diss, Count and Co., Benicia, were engaged on a scrutiny not wholly unconnected with the present *dramatis personæ.*

A strange Child, scarcely as tall as the money-shovel if upright, called upon Mr. Snagg, the Chief Clerk.

Mr. Snagg was in bed, but as the Infant was importunate, the old man-of-business deemed that, in the interest of his employers, he had better see him.

The result of the interview was, that Mr. Snagg at once ran down to the office and summoned the three partners.

The four (the Child waiting anxiously without) commenced a rigid inquiry into the title-deeds, contracts, and all law papers, bonds, scrip, shares, and debentures held by their estimable client Piel Dornton.

In an hour's time the Child was on his way to Phlebosco Palace, and was standing before the Lady Anna Domino, who was writing a letter. He regarded her lovingly. "I don't like to hurt her, but *he's* a villain—he's a bad 'un. I will."

This he said to himself, and then she turned and addressed him.

"You have seen my hus——. Your master?" she inquired.

"I have."

"And he is——"

"Don't ask me," said the poor boy, "I'll do anything to save *you*—I would, indeed, I would."

And he shouted and screamed, and laid hold of her dress, and whined, and wriggled in his deep despair.

"You are the only cove who's ever been kind to me," he said to her. "And for your sake——"

"Hush!" she said, gently pushing him through a pane of glass into the garden.

Then she thought for a few minutes. "The end must come," she said, presently, to herself. "Let it: take these packets to your master."

The Child, who had returned, pulled a lock of his shaggy hair, and quitted the house.

Immediately, upon the doorstep, he was seized by a rough hand.

"Come with me," said a strange voice. "No larks, young 'un, or I'll—ah, would you?" This question was in consequence of a wriggle on the Infant's part to escape from his tormentor's clutches. It was useless.

Detective Gripp was not the man to let a customer go so easily.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MEETING LIKE THIS.

OCKED in each other's arms stood the Lieutenant and Grace.

She had been introduced to her father, Old Martin, but preferred her uncle.

"Fie, Grace!" said the Lieutenant.

The Lieutenant wanted to know who that gentleman was in the distance.

"My preserver!" she exclaimed rapturously, and told them what an amusing and instructive companion Nutt was, and how she'd never enjoyed herself so much anywhere as on this island.

Nutt came up smiling, bashfully.

"This!!" exclaimed the Lieutenant. "What do you mean, Grace? *This* is the *Boomerang!!*"

Through all his change he saw it—the *Boomerang.*

"Once I was," Nutt replied, bearing himself erectly and showing off his dress clothes to the greatest possible advantage.

"Not now."

"A servant!" exclaimed the Lieutenant.

"A kind one," answered Grace extending her hand.

Nutt worshipped her now, and the tears rose to his eyes.

"Take her," said the Lieutenant, "and marry her."

"My consent is wanted," interrupted her father, Old Marmaduke.

"Stop!" said Grace. "I am another's—Piel Dornton's."

"True," was the Lieutenant's answer. "The contract was signed on that fatal night."

"Mr. Marmaduke, Lieutenant, and Miss Grace," began Nutt, much moved.

"Hear! hear!" said Commander Bouncer, who had not been included in the opening part of the address. Nutt rectified the omission and proceeded.

"Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I am bound to say,—ahem—that this the unhappiest, though the proudest moment of my life."

Bouncer wept.

"Let me tell you my short, but melancholy tale."

Here the sailors came on shore in boats, so interested, through their telescopes, in this strange man's narrative.

"A ship! a ship!" shouted the Commander fervently. A ship, indeed. From it came a small boat, with Piel Dornton on board.

He landed, and after welcoming the Lieutenant, went at once to Grace.

She received him confusedly. Then he confronted Nutt.

Suddenly the blood left his cheeks and he would have fallen, but for Old Martin, who fell instead, and hurt himself.

"Hear him!" cried the Commander, with true English

love of fair play, and some curiosity as to the rest of Nutt's speech.

"Lady and Gentlemen," he recommenced, "let me tell you my story. I was brought up at an infant school, and subsequently, being a boy of studious habits, was apprenticed to a lecturer at the Polytechnic. Here I acquired that scientific knowledge which to have learnt has made me supremely happy, seeing that it has alleviated the miseries of one for whom I entertain feelings of the most profound admiration and the deepest love." He bowed to Grace and proceeded. She felt he had never, even when dressed to catch the geese and wild fowl—never, never, looked so beautiful as now.

"It was here, too, I mean at the Polytechnic, I mastered that clear and lucid style in which it has been my highest endeavour to explain to you the wonders of nature, and the marvels, during our evenings, of the microscope. So well have we enployed our hours here," he turned to Grace for corroboration, who said "yes," and begged him to go on—"That we have run through the entire cycle of Polytechnic lectures, including the dissolving views, which we really managed admirably, the drop of Thames water with the living creatures in it, the exposition of spiritualism, the automaton Leotard, and many other useful and entertaining experiments, including glass-blowing for the tails of peacocks and imitation candles which won't light, and we were proceeding to the diving-bell and blowing up the *Royal George* under water when your arrival interfered with our settled plan. Excuse me—to return. I quitted the Polytechnic to join a distinguished aëronaut——"

"I know you now," exclaimed Dornton. "This fellow," he said, turning to Grace and the Lieutenant, "is a fraudulent solicitor."

"You thought so, perhaps, Piel Dornton," was Nutt's calm reply, which seemed to crush the other into the earth. "When you threw my companion and myself out of the balloon into the sea. You thought so, no doubt, when you seized the deeds and papers, with which my unhappy companion was indeed escaping from the hands of justice. He *was* a fraudulent solicitor—not I. Let me explain: for he —well for him that it is so, perhaps! *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*——"

"Hear, hear!" said Commander Bouncer.

"He is no more. My aëronautic friend started his balloon from a public garden. Here it was hired by a private party. That Private Party was the Fraudulent Solicitor; I was told off to attend to him. He arrived with his deeds and boxes. His pistol was constantly at my ear, and I was obliged to give up all chance of escape and leave him, the balloon, and myself to a merciful fate—with my eye, however, always on the parachute. From above I saw this man give his wretched father the fatal blow in the Cavern by the Sea——" *

"It's a lie!" shrieked Piel Dornton

"It is truth, as I stand here," returned Nutt. "He climbed in by our grapnel when we were almost aground, and repaid our hospitality with another crime."

* *Vide* Early Chapters of this remarkable work.—*Editor.*

"The name of the Solicitor?" asked Old Martin, eagerly.

"Smith," was Nutt's answer.

Old Martin turned to his brother, Leonard Charles. "'Twas he," he said, who drew up the lost deed. Smith."

So excited was everyone that they had not noticed the approach of two separate boats, whose occupants now stood forward.

In the first came Chekk, Diss, Count, & Co., rowing, with Gripp, the Detective, holding the Infant, and Snagg, the clerk, steering.

In the second, Bessy with Joseph and the papers, sailing.

Gripp spoke. "These papers, signed Smith, were placed in the hands of these 'ere respectable gents," alluding to the Benician Bankers, who appeared pleased. By them he became the large landowner you've known him. By them," and he produced another set, "he took under the will of Leonard Charles Marchmont, deceased——"

"The villain!" exclaimed the irascible old man.

"*Everything!*"

"It's a lie, a confounded LIE!" roared Piel Dornton.

"No, it isn't, my Chirper, except you're alluding to all your papers as is a lie, a forgery, and no mistake. Who seed him forge?"

"I seed him forgin' 'em at his desk," answered the Infant, sulkily.

"You!" exclaimed Dornton. The net was closing round him now.

"Aye, Guv'nor, you cut a cradle down *from a tree opposite your window.* In that cradle lay a Child. I was, I am,

that Child, and I've tracked you this day.* I wouldn't ha' done it," he whimpered, "if you hadn't ill-treated *her*."

"Her!" exclaimed every one.

"Yes, mum," continued the boy. "'er, *'er*, as was the *h*only cove *h*ever kind to me."

Gripp shook him. Gripp knew he meant the Lady Anna Domino; but he said nothing.

"Now," said Gripp, "afore we finishes, let's clear up these here missin' papers. Step forward, young man, and young woman."

Joseph stood before them with Bessy. He showed them the papers, and the Lieutenant was introduced to his long-lost daughter, who, however, embraced Martin.

Then the two old men wept in each other's arms.

Then they all set to work to examine the legal papers.

We append the original will and Dornton's forgery, which will show the reader to what perfection the villain had brought the copyist's art.

PIEL DORNTON'S FORGERY (FAC SIMILE.)

I leave to my deer frend, Piel Dornton, all my estates, palaces, castles, and all that there litile propperty known as £2000000000000000000000000,

* See this exciting incident in a previous chapter. Most exciting. —*Editor.*

now invested in Benician Securities. In proof of which I sign and seal and deliver this as my act and deed.

Augustus Leonard
Charles Marchmont
Lieutenant B.R.H.M.

Witness. Smith

L. C. Marchmont (real handwriting)

I leave to my dear friend &c
all that &c.
Yours truly
Augustus Leonard
Charles Marchmont
Lieutenant Ben. Royal H. Marines.

Nutt was of immense use here, owing to his having spent so much time in a balloon with a solicitor.

He pointed out the habendum clause, and explained all the flaws and the dealings with the various technicalities and difficulties, and when these were removed, it was as clear as daylight that Grace Marchmont must henceforth bear the title of Baroness Bismuth, with the property thereunto appertaining, which, as has already been seen, was no inconsiderable amount.

"A baroness?" exclaimed Nutt, sorrowfully, "and rich!" he turned away.

She gave him her hand.

"I am yours, yours always!"

He clasped her in his arms, as the two old men whispered to one another, The Baroness Bismuth and Mr. Horatio Nutt.

Then the partners, Chekk, Discount & Co., requested that they might in future receive the favour of their orders, which was accorded to them, and Gripp and the Commander shook hands upon the happy termination of their trouble. They were paid off at once, and the sailors cheered all night, and were with difficulty removed from the island in the morning.

Before they quitted the island, the bank partners explained that Joseph, by the decease of the late nobleman, a wicked elder brother, who had never owned his father, he (Joseph) was now a titled aristocrat.

And what of Piel Dornton! The convicted forger, the murderer, the cruel husband, the black-hearted, bold, bad man?

He had disappeared. None knew where nor whither.

"Leave me alone," said Gripp.

They left him alone, save and except that Joseph offered a thousand pounds for his apprehension, payable only if he was caught alive.

Gripp pushed his boat to sea. The Infant was crouched in the stern.

The Commander, who had become tired of inaction, joined them in the pursuit.

So they went upon the track of the forger, the bold black-hearted villain.

And he?

LAST CHAPTER.

THE END.

HE Bells of Benicia were ringing for the double marriage. Grace at one church to her beloved Nutt ; Bess at the other to her own dear Joseph, now Joseph, Marquis of Mewsickall, with title of free-pass-to-the-Alhambra, and Baron Cancan, of Mabille, as a special honour from the Tuileries, whose motto has, since the events here recorded, become familiar in English mouths as household bread. We must also take this opportunity of adding, that Her Majesty's Government, determining to reward Lieutenant Marchmont for his distinguished services, patented him by the title of Sir Charles, to imitate which is fraudulent, and punishable by several acts of Parliament.

While these festivities were being enacted, another scene of a different sort was being played out by two performers.

In an apartment in the good Bishop's palace, which by a special rescript from the Home Office he had been permitted to let unfurnished, the tenant, Lady Anna Domino, taking the fitted fixtures, &c., on which arrangement we have neither time nor inclination to dwell now more minutely, sat the Lady Anna Domino.

On the opposite side of the room behind a curtain, stood Piel Dornton, regarding her curiously.

"Beautiful for ever!" he muttered between his set teeth.

Then he stood before her, pale, with bloodshot eyes and matted hair—he stood before her.

She saw at once, with a woman's intuitive perception, that the end had come.

"At last," she said. She still admired the man who had so cruelly deceived her.

"Recrimination is useless," he said, slowly and bitterly.

"Yes," she replied, in a cold tone. "It is."

"The police are here," he added, looking calmly from the window.

She inquired what division, and with his glass he was enabled to answer her question satisfactorily.

"My mind is made up," he continued; and then, with a slight tremor in his voice which even now midst all his villain's cunning showed there was one green spot in that cankered sin-dried heart, he added, "what will become of you?"

"*What?*" returned Lady Anna, turning towards him. "Do *you* think of that at *last?*" She stretched out her hand to him with something of the old affection in her touch "Go, Piel," she said, "go and poison yourself."

"I will," he replied, and undoing a large hamper marked "glass with care" which he had hitherto kept carefully concealed about his person, he extracted therefrom a large jar, and was about to drink its contents, when she arrested his hand.

At that supreme instant was it an old tender yearning.

She looked at him, then downwards at the carpet.

He had owned property himself in his prosperity, and divined the meaning of the glance.

"True," he replied; "as you wish. In the next room."

He walked towards the door, then turned, and in both arms held aloft the fatal bottle which contained a bright red fluid, and was marked outside with a hieroglyphic character known only to those whose trade it is to deal in such dread preparations.

Once more he spoke.

"And you?"

"I will survive to know that *you* are out of the clutches of these myrmidons of a cruel law, and then——" she covered her face with her hands, and sank upon a *fauteuil*.

He closed the door.

In another moment the officers rushed into the apartment.

"The forger, the murderer, the upholsterer — where is he?"

"Your warrant?" asked the Lady Anna indignantly.

The chief beckoned, and a private in the force stepped forward with a roll of paper under his arm.

"It is enough," she said. "You will find him there."

They entered the room, and returned almost immediately.

"There must be an inquest," said the chief.

"As you will," said Lady Anna. "At all events I am at liberty."

The polite officials did all that was necessary, and were

subsequently entertained in the servants' hall until a late hour.

The Lady Anna being much pitied as the victim of a villain's machination, was *fêted* for some considerable time after his decease, and if there was the slightest stain upon her otherwise fair character it was at once removed by the good bishop, whose tenant she continued to be at an advanced rental. Only she obtained permission to change its name from Phlebosco Palace to the more appropriate title of Kreammawn.

So in the beautiful gardens of Kreammawn, amid water-works and fire-works, with lovely singing-birds, foreign and native, including the several rare specimens of the flying trapèze which, with cuttings from the boot-trees, and *genera* of corkscrew-fish, spoon-bills, and other such *lapsus linguæ*, Grace had found upon the memorable island, and had presented partly to Lady Anna partly to the Benician Museum, were celebrated the matrimonial festivities of the happy two pairs, which lasted several days. Then the brides and bridegrooms left in a couple of steam-yachts, which had been previously blessed by the excellent bishop, for the dear old Eel Pie Island in the Pacific, where Nutt (who was now the Right Honourable William Nutt, elected to represent his new possession in the Lower Benician Chambers) built them a couple of houses, and stocked their paddock, and laid out their gardens, and charged them only half as much again as it would have cost them if they'd done it themselves.

And then they rested.

And on a calm summer's evening, with the aged Lieu-

tenant, now obliged to wear a white wig, and support himself with a stick, and still clinging to the costume of his old Venetian regimentals, on one side, and, on the other, Old Martin, who, unable to shake off his old labourer's habits, was always dressed in the brightly spotted dress of the clownish order in Benicia, his red and white cheeks being, at his age, the external signs of inward happiness, and rude health; we say with these two, one on either side, would stand in the centre the happy Nutt, in a bright gorgeous dress and a black half mask, partially concealing his features, (the custom in the Benician Chamber,) supporting with his out-stretched knee and stalwart arm the form of his fair and beautifully dressed bride, while behind them rose a romantic bower, as it were, a fairy pavilion of imagination and fancy glittering, and dazzling, until among the plaudits and huzzas of the delighted populace, the kind Marquis Joseph, aided by his dear wife Elizabeth, would light up great fires of joy which shed their sometime red, sometime green light upon the glorious scene before them.

"Happy indeed," said Grace, in after years, "was the thought which occurred to me, dear, upon the Island of sending these FOWLS out with our dinner advertisements for the Island."

"Sending the fowls in that manner, and on such an errand *was* hazardous," would her husband reply, caressing his eldest son Tommy, who was growing every day more like both of them, with perhaps just the slightest resemblance to the pet seal which he had trained upon the Island.

"It was hazardous," would be her answer,

"It was indeed CHIKKIN HAZARD."

* * * * * *

Readers, we have done. This is the tale Nutt and Grace told to their Children.—This is the tale we have told to you.

Editor to Authors.—Gentlemen all, I congratulate you. We shall never meet again.

THE BARROW OF BORDEAUX;

OR, A LIFE'S MYSTERY.

THE

BARROW OF BORDEAUX;

OR, A LIFE'S MYSTERY.

PROLOGUE.

(EXTRACT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY THE PERSON KNOWN AS CHARLES DENMONT TO HIS FRIEND X——.)

T is not too late. I am a broken old man, weary of a world which once caressed as lavishly as it has since cruelly persecuted me. Two generations have appeared on the scene before whom I have been silent. Now I may speak. Passions, once apparently unquenchable, have long since been extinguished. Undying hatreds lie cold in the graves of the most implacable foes. Love has outlived all except the lover. I have nothing now to gain by a silence which for years past I have religiously observed. I know that what I have to reveal can neither implicate any now living nor bring shame and sorrow on a single name in the roll-call of breathing men. It may perhaps, lead some to do tardy justice to one who, by force of circumstances, has been doomed to live—nay, perhaps to

die—a helpless, ay, and worse, a hopeless, victim. To you, my friend, who have often shown yourself generous and charitable where others have refused to aid me ; to you, I say, I now confide my papers, in the faint hope that, on their being published, some one may come forward to lighten the oad of sorrow which, more than age, has bent me down ; which, more than the horrors of a prison, has blanched my hair and has forced me to pass a sad and solitary existence, deprived, not (I thank Heaven) of the necessaries of life, with which my own toil has supplied me, but deprived of all that sweet companionship for which, more than for aught else, I had yearned, and which, through no fault of mine, that I can recognise—though I bow to Heaven's ruling, and own, if need be, any unconscious guilt which has engendered a life's penance—has been mysteriously denied me. Do, then, what you will with these papers. You will act for the best in concealing my name until such time as you shall see fit to reveal it. But above all, my dear friend, remember that, in spite of my great wrongs, in spite of my unparalleled sufferings, I look only for justice, and have within my heart, I can solemnly avow, no single thought of vengeance. If now, at the last moment, my persecutors—should they yet live—will but confess their crime, I shall have for them nothing but forgiveness. Their descendants may be seeking me out to make reparation for their father's wrong done to me ere they had seen the light of day. If so, these papers will be their guide, and you, my friend, can lead them to where such heavy sins can be atoned and pardoned. Farewell.

CHAPTER I.

A DREAM OF HAPPINESS.

WAS twenty-two when, while staying at Boulogne, I fell in love with Clotilde, the only daughter of the Comte de Champvilliers, a name so illustrious in the annals of France as to know no equal, still less a rival.

If my name was less distinguished than 'theirs in the history of my own country, still it was no mean one, and its origin could be traced to that ancient stock whose root was, most probably, in the fair fields of Normandy, whence came the Duke, who, pre-eminently above all Dukes before or since, not even excepting the Iron Duke, has been to us the conquering hero.

Clotilde, at the time I speak of, was the loveliest brunette that the glorious sun of Southern France had ever shone upon. Ah! as I sit with pen in hand to describe her, I lean back, I close my eyes, and, as in a vision, she comes back to me. Small, but of exquisite symmetry, the glow of health upon her brown and dimpled cheek; her lips full, red, and moist; her hazel eyes set in a crystal reflecting the bright blue of a summer's morning sky, were curtained around by a delicate fringe so black as to add, if that were possible, fresh lustre to the eye, so long that, when her eyelids drooped

ever so little, they seemed like fairy bars imprisoning the light within. The dimples on her cheeks were multiplied in her hands ; each knuckle of the open hand could have held a pearly dew-drop from the rose-leaf ; each beautifully-fashioned nail was roseate-tinted as is the small delicate shell left by the bounteous waves of the Mediterranean. Ah ! Clotilde, standing out luminous from among the dark shadows of the past, how I loved you ! how I love you !

I will not pause to describe my own person or qualities at that time; suffice it to say that Clotilde returned my affection with all the warmth of which her nature was capable, and that both the Comte and Comtesse saw with the real delight which the fondest parents experience in the prospect of their children's happiness, the bonds of union being drawn closer and closer between Mdlle. de Champvilliers and myself.

I had no rivals ; I had numerous acquaintances ; I had, then, many friends. My wealth, without being enormous, was more than that possessed by the noble family into which I was marrying, and was sufficient of itself to attract the secret envy and the public homage of society, whether in France or England.

The latter country, indeed, I seldom visited, except for the purpose of buying horses, carriages, and harness, which, at the period of which I speak, could not be obtained in anything like perfection out of London. Clotilde was passionately fond of equestrian exercise, and I had promised her that the first winter of our married life should be spent in one of the best hunting counties of England. Need I say

which it was? No; the time for this has not yet come, since to reveal the name of my English estate would be needlessly to prejudice those who will otherwise read this history and form their own judgment.

For me this taste of Clotilde's was, as events have subsequently proved, most fortunate. I invested largely, under a *nom de commerce*, in English funds and securities; purchased a fine property in Exetershire, with the most extensive shooting in any of the three neighbouring counties; manned a yacht of two hundred tons, which I called the *Clotilde*, in honour of my betrothed; entered a horse for the Derby; and, having paid my final visit to England as a bachelor, returned to Boulogne in order to make the necessary arrangements for my approaching marriage.

CHAPTER II.

SHADOWS ACROSS THE PATH.

ONE thing, and one thing alone, was the subject of difference between Clotilde and myself. It was a habit so ingrained by constant use ever since I had left my first school, that nothing, save the free action of a strong determined will, and the desire to do all in one's power to gratify the smallest wish expressed by the object of my devotion, could possibly have eradicated it, as it were, from my system. Smoking was at the time of which I speak not the rule among young men of fashion, but the exception, and in this I had indulged for many years. At Clotilde's request, indeed, I had gradually broken with the nymph Nicotina so far as to celebrate her rites only once a day, and the time selected for the sacrifice was after I had left the Count's house and was walking home. On these occasions I used to light my cigar and walk up and down the pier, whence I could see the light in Clotilde's window, and could give way to those sweet reveries which form, perhaps, the sweetest portion of every one's life, certainly of a lover's. Yes, all have at some time or other had this experience. Can there be one who has never loved? Ask rather if there lives one who has never breathed? In a churchyard how many graves are nameless,

over how many the tombstone has preserved nothing save the name, and that, too, is wearing out? The silent have buried their loves, and live in the world, marble and stone, without a word to any that would recall the past. People wonder if such a one has ever known what love was, just as passers-by, seeing the blurred stone, wonder who may lie beneath, and how long since he was one like themselves. I, too, for years have uttered no word, have made no sign. My only happiness in life since I was twenty-two was commenced in those reveries on the pier when I was smoking my cigar, and has been continued only in dreams, sleeping and waking, from that time to this. What the reality has been—ah, Heaven! what the reality of my life has been you shall hear.

On the evening of the third day previous to the one now fixed for our wedding I had dined, as usual, at the Count's, had played *bakardo*—a Venetian game of cards of which the old gentleman was remarkably fond, and at which, in order to humour him, I always allowed him to come off the winner; though, indeed, there was very little merit in this harmless piece of duplicity, as Clotilde engrossed all my thoughts, and it was with difficulty that I was even able to recognise the court cards as they appeared in due turn on the table.

However, the Count was excessively pleased (he liked winning), and this, too, put Madame la Comtesse in great good humour also, as he had patted her on the cheek, and addressed her as "Ma belle!" She smiled upon both myself and Clotilde in a manner which bespoke her own sentiments of tranquil enjoyment.

We, assisted by the old people, had sketched out our plans for the future ; had arranged how we were to meet in England, how we were to pass our honeymoon in Italy, how—how, in fact, we were to be as happy as the days were long.

That night, contrary to her custom—for French mothers of noble lineage are invariably most strict in all that regards their daughters—Clotilde was permitted to accompany me down-stairs, and to bid me *bon soir* and *au plaisir* at the front door.

Hand in hand we passed the conciergerie, where the old man and his wife were too busily engaged on their supper to notice us ; and thus undisturbed we stood in the pale moonlight on the threshold of the courtyard.

Was it some strange presentiment that made me clasp her in my arms, as though to protect her from some invisible spirit of ill passing by? We were loth to part from one another that night. We had little to say save good-night, which we repeated at intervals at least twenty times, and took no account of the rapidly-fleeting minutes.

"You will come early to-morrow," she said.

"Early ! Would that I had not to go now !" was my fervid reply. "Would that the time had come when none would have the right to sever us, even for a few minutes ! "

"You love me so much," she murmured.

Great Heaven ! how I loved her at that moment ! Once more I stand, in thought, as I have stood often in the dreams of night, at the entrance to the courtyard of the Hôtel

Champvilliers. We embrace passionately for the last time that night . . . and for ever.

Could I have foreseen—could I have had but the most partial glimpse of the future—I would have taken her from her father's house that night, or would have gone to my own residence swiftly, without turning to the right or the left, without yielding to the strong desire to stay for a while watching the light in her window while, as it seemed, the warm pressure still remained on my hand.

"Clotilde!"

It was her mother's voice. Obedience to her was Clotilde's first law. For one half moment longer she allowed me to detain her, then, whispering in my ear "*Au demain*," she left me, and I passed out.

There were signs of a storm in the air that night. Signs ashore, signs at sea. Flitting clouds obscuring the waning moon and a chill wind that seemed to sigh as it swept over the cliffs towards the sea. Mechanically I wrapt my cloak about me and made for the pier. Boulogne pier was not then what I have seen it since, and far different from what I am informed it is at the present day.

Besides, at the time of which I speak it was under repair, and gigantic piles and beams half sawn, thick planks, ropes, and chains were lying about, or were propped up against one another in strange confusion. Great blocks of stone, too, there were, which ever and anon streaked the pier with broad black shadows, in the fitful moonlight, and appearing to me as ghostly companions come to relieve the solitude of the night.

Against the pier railing I leant and smoked. It was high tide, and the waves plashed lazily against the supports of the pier with a low, murmuring sound, as though they were merely turning over in their sleep, and were rocking themselves slumbering, towards the shore.

Hardly a twinkle of light on land, and a brighter star than its fellows only occasionally to be seen peering out from behind the filmy veil above. Heaven and earth had closed their eyes, and I seemed to be alone in the universe.

Alone, and yet so happy, in that still and silent night.

The church clocks from the town sounded the hour. Midnight. My cigar was half consumed, and the remainder would last me as far as my house.

So saying to myself, I turned to throw one last lingering glance towards the window where Clotilde's candle had but a quarter of an hour since been extinguished, when I became aware for the first time that I was not the only person on the pier.

Two indistinct forms emerged from behind the blocks of stone. To leave the pier I saw at once that there was nothing for it but to pass them, and that at close quarters.

As I walked towards them they moved towards a spot where, on account of the lumber lying about, there could be only passage for one person at a time.

I paused to consider my next step, and decided upon resuming my former position. Perhaps they had not noticed me, or, for some reasons of their own, wished to escape observation.

A few seconds made their object apparent. They advanced towards me.

"Good evening, Sir," said the first and taller of the two in a low tone. He spoke French with an accent which smacked strongly of the Basque Provinces.

I returned his salutation with as much sangfroid as I was capable of at the moment. There was just then light enough for me to see those two men distinctly, *and from that day to this I have never forgotten them.* The man who addressed me was dressed in a rough, seafaring costume—as, indeed, they both were, only that the taller had then a Spanish cloak around him, while his companion had on a thick woollen wrapper, a pea-jacket, and a pair of high fisherman's boots. The villanous expression of this man's countenance I have never seen equalled, and a black patch which he wore over his left eye made him still more hideous than Nature had originally intended him to be.

Unlike his taller companion, who wore a beard and moustache, this man was closely shaved, showing only a dark blue mask, as it were, over the lower half of the face. The uncovered eye shone out beneath a lowering and bushy eyebrow, as though, being alone, it were doing work enough for both, and allowing nothing to escape it on any account.

The tall man had a pale face, an aquiline nose, beard and moustache as described above, and so peculiar a cast in both eyes that they seemed to be focussing themselves on one especial point, which apparently was the second stud of my open shirt-front, for, strange to say, while dreamily standing

on the pier I had allowed the cloak to drop from my shoulders, and, whether it had fallen into the sea, or was only lost in the gloom, I at this moment could not see it, nor did I venture to allow my attention to be distracted by so unimportant an object from the two strangers, whose appearance filled me with suspicion. Having for many years been accustomed to travel in the wildest parts of Europe, I had, more from habit than from any feeling of nervousness, always carried a small pistol in my breast pocket. Instinctively I felt for it. It was gone !

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET IS NAMED.

HE men were now standing within two yards of me, the taller somewhat in advance of his companion.

"A beautiful night for enjoying a cigar," said the former, in the same low tone in which he had first addressed me.

I nodded assent somewhat coldly, and watched their movements so narrowly that, on the slightest hint, I should have put myself on the defensive. In former days I had been a pupil of Tom Buck's, and knew that the first blow was everything against even more formidable odds than two to one. My only chance I saw was, in the event of a struggle, to deliver the upper cut at once straight from the shoulder, and thus dispose of my foremost antagonist, who, in his fall, would seriously encumber the action of his associate. This would give me time either to gain the town or to slide down one of the slippery piles into the sea below, whence, being no indifferent swimmer, I could soon reach the shore.

In far less time than it takes me to write it had this plan fixed itself in my mind. Once thus resolved, I became perfectly calm, taking care, however, not to allow myself to be put off my guard.

The tall man, who had already taken the initiative, now continued, while the shorter one, standing a few paces behind him, kept casting furtive glances in every direction, as though he were expecting either assistance or a surprise. Occasionally I fancied I detected him in the act of raising the patch which concealed his left eye, but of this I was not certain then, nor am I now. Enough for me that, with or without that black patch, his features are indelibly impressed on my memory.

"We have," the tall man informed me, in a whisper which seemed to chill me to the very marrow, "we have some of the finest cigars that were ever made—the real Caballero's brand—the value of which, in America, is something like six hundred francs a pound; and in England not a single Havannah of this make can be obtained for less than five shillings a cigar."

I thanked him for this piece of intelligence, and attempted to put an end to further conversation by telling him that I should, in future, have no need of tobacco in any shape, as I had determined upon giving up smoking entirely.

"I told you so," said the shorter of the two, in so rasping and hoarse a voice, that it seemed like the spirit of a sea-fog speaking.

"You are right, comrade," replied the former without turning, "and Monsieur will do well—nay, he cannot do better—than inspect such a stock as we can show him of silks, cashmeres, diamonds of Ind, golden lace of Japan, emeralds from the Caucasus, and such treasures as

would make a bridal present matchless, above price, unique."

Enthusiastic as he was, he never allowed his voice to rise for one second above a whisper, intensified to a greater or less degree; nor did I notice that, during his speech, his companion relaxed in the least his perpetual vigilance. For the matter of that, no more did I. However, my method was to avoid any chance of collision by sufficient politeness; and, though my caution suggested to me that I should here attempt to close the conversation, yet my curiosity was aroused. Alas! in that one minute's wavering was contained the germ of that deadly parasite which has since wound itself around my tree of life, exhausting my heart's blood drop by drop until it left me the withered, wasted thing that you have known me. Forgive me this passing sigh. You know something of what I have suffered. Something, indeed, but not all. Let me hasten on.

"Such things," said the hoarse echo of the taller man, "as will make Mademoiselle de Champvilliers"—I could not repress a start, but he continued as if without noticing it—"the happiest bride in all France."

"Such things," said the first speaker, once more taking up his theme, but always in the same cautious whisper, "as no count, no duke, no king—ay, and no sultan or emperor—could purchase. Such marriage gifts as will cause the donor's name to resound through the length and breadth of Europe——"

"Of Asia," added the hoarse voice, parenthetically, as

though he were afraid of his companion omitting an important point.

"He is right," said his friend; "and not Asia alone, but no one quarter of the world—no, not all together—can show such——"

"Prenez-garde, Martin!" interrupted the watcher, laying a massive hand upon his companion's arm. Then they both turned, and, as the moonlight fell beyond them, they shaded their eyes with their hands, and tried to penetrate the distant gloom. It was a false alarm. I told them that I had heard nothing.

"Ah, monsieur," replied the one called Martin, "our eyes and ears are practised. Say, then, you, monsieur, who have not yet made your choice, would you give the most superb gift that art and nature can produce upon your bride?"

Clotilde again. What could these men know of her? What of me and of my marriage? It was true that I had not yet selected *the* cadeau which was to be the crowning memento for the future day of our union. But why should these men interest themselves? Were they smugglers, anxious to dispose of their valuable but dangerous goods?

I confided to them my suspicions. With much sophistry Martin defended himself from any imputation of dishonesty; and, indeed, so reasonably and so forcibly did he urge his claims, proving, moreover, the priceless advantages which would accrue to me from my dealings with himself and his partner (Gaspar he named him), that I finally lent a not unwilling ear to their description, and, having lighted one

of the largest and certainly finest cigars I had ever seen—for which I was indebted to Gaspar, who carried a box of them concealed under his ample seafaring coat—I prepared to accompany them, or rather follow them, to their abode in the town.

I imagined to myself the pleasure that would beam in Clotilde's eyes on receiving such a present as I now contemplated procuring for her. As we neared the entrance to the pier, a sudden thought occurred to me, which I saw would be at once my safeguard in case treachery were intended, and a test of their honesty. It was this: I had no money beyond a few francs with me.

"It is no matter," answered Martin.

"We can trust Monsieur," said Gaspar.

"And, in proof, are we not doing so," asked Martin; "perhaps, it may be, with our lives?"

I replied that they were safe with me. So we walked on, silently, with wolflike steps.

"And yet," said Martin, stopping short under shadow of the old town wall (I believe it has long since been pulled down), and addressing himself to Gaspar more than to me, "and yet if he knew——"

"If," sneered Gaspar. Then, dropping his voice to its former low, hoarse whisper, he continued. "If it were worth his while to reveal our secret, we would not bring him hither; *if* it would raise this suspicion, and bring us and ours to the guillotine, we would not bring him hither. Would we, comrade?"

"Assuredly not," answered Martin.

"Why, then, let us not hesitate to tell him of the treasure —*the* treasure—in our possession. It binds him to us, does it not?"

"Certainly it does," responded the other.

"Without an oath?" asked Gaspar.

"Without an oath," answered Martin.

I had listened intently to this dialogue, which had been carried on partly in French and partly in a language of which I had some slight knowledge, that of the Romanos, the regal gipsy tribe of Spain. In an instant I decided upon keeping the fact of my acquaintance with this strange tongue a secret from them. I pretended, therefore, that I was cold, and wished them to walk on quickly. They complied with my request. But as we stole onwards I picked up fragments of their conversation, which they continued in the Romanos language.

"Shall we show it him?" asked Martin of his companion.

"Ay. There is no rule. And if it places power in his hands will it not be for us, and not against us, afterwards?"

"True, Gaspar. But for his bride, Clotilde?"

"It will secure her happiness, and at no risk to ourselves."

I was so attentive that I had no time to remark anything about the streets and turnings which we were taking, except that they all seemed new to me. To listen and to pick one's way over the vile stones was no easy matter for a stranger in that quarter. Here and there a small oil-lamp, burning before some devotional statue at the corner of a street, was the only sign of life to be met with. Occasionally the mas-

sive stone wall and heavy wooden gate of some ancient church came upon us suddenly (rather than we upon it) from out of the quaint, overhanging, gabled old houses, which seemed herded together for warmth's sake in that poverty-stricken district. Startled rats leapt from the open drains at our approach, and spectre-like dogs snarled at us over the loathsome garbage.

When I came up with them again they were still speaking of Clotilde.

"It will," Martin was saying, "be the secret of her existence. If she does not know it"—— Here he hesitated.

"If she does not," said Gaspar, hoarsely, "is her doom sealed? Will she die?"

What unknown danger threatened Clotilde? Wherever they might be leading me, I had decided to know all now.

"Die!" whispered Martin, as though, even in that desolate spot, the thought were too painful for words. "Die! *Mon Dieu!* So young, so fair! No, Gaspar; he shall see and judge for himself. It is for him only, not for us, to decide."

"Then," returned Gaspar, placing his hand on his companion's shoulder, and lifting up towards his a face which almost equalled his own in its awful pallor—"then we will show him the" . . . He paused, supporting himself by his friend's shoulder, while a visible tremor passed through his frame.

"Name it, comrade!" said Martin.

They had stopped under an old archway. I would not for my life have missed one word.

"We will show him," replied Gaspar, still convulsively grasping his companion's shoulder, "the Barrow of Bordeaux."

There was silence for some seconds as Martin leant against the wall, and Gaspar, apparently, wiped the perspiration from his own livid countenance. Then Martin asked, in a tone which hardly reached my ear,

"The barrow, comrade?"

"Ay," replied Gaspar, with the air of a man who had formed a desperate resolve. "It *must* be: it *shall* be. . . . . Now—in this place—for *her* sake more than his, we will show him the Barrow of Bordeaux."

"Agreed."

For *her* sake more than his! . . . The barrow of Bordeaux! . . . I had no time for even one question as Gaspar beckoned me to approach the spot where they were standing.

Martin now took from a chain which for the first time I saw about his neck a small brass rule, which glittered even in the faint light that reached the archway.

"Three to the right, good," he said, as he completed a measurement in that direction.

"Three to the left," he continued, while Gaspar knelt on the rough stones and gave three knocks with a small hammer, at the same moment that Martin displaced a large brick, behind which was a strong iron ring.

"At last!" exclaimed Gaspar, and producing a stout cord he was about to fasten it to the ring when both men paused

suddenly in their work and regarded each other with looks of mingled hatred and mistrust.

"You have not deceived me?" said Martin, sternly.

"On my soul!" answered Gaspar.

"Hush!"

A measured tramp, within a few paces of us. The gendarmerie. An agony of listening followed, as we heard the sergeant give some word of command. Then, judging by the sound, the company divided, and the equal tread was evident on both sides of the street.

"Fly for your life!" exclaimed Gaspar in my ear.

"But," I asked hurriedly, for I felt that every second of delay was dangerous, and yet I knew not why. "But what is this of Clotilde's life . . . her happiness . . . say, when will you show me this!"

"Barrow of Bordeaux!" he whispered, hoarsely. "The same time—and place—to-morrow! See, Martin, has gone. Coward! Leave go, or by Heaven!"——

He dashed me aside with savage fury, and disappeared within the darkest part of the arch. Martin had, as he said, fled on the very first alarm. In another second I heard a sound as of a plunge from a height into deep water, and once again the voice of the sergeant commanding a halt. Then I waited for no more, but, creeping out from beneath the archway, gained the open street. Once here, I stole on, at first stooping and under the wall; then, as I heard the challenge "Qui va là?" and the sharp click of the muskets, I ran forward—furiously, blindly, guided only by the instinct of self-preservation. Now to the right, now to the left.

On—on—on ; followed at length only by the dying echoes of my footfalls, until, striking my foot against some stone steps which abutted on a wall, I fell exhausted, and fainted with the pain.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAUNTING WORDS.

HEN I recovered I found myself in my own bed. Standing at its side were an old priest and a sister of charity, who fervently expressed her gratitude to *le bon Dieu* when I opened my eyes once more to the world around me.

They had found me near the quay, they said; and, guided by a card in my pocket-book, they had brought me to my house.

My knee, in consequence of the cut, was very stiff and painful, and the good sister recommended me to lie still for some hours, occasionally bathing it with a lotion which she had provided for my use.

So much I heard and so much I understood; but then my thoughts wandered back to the events of the previous night, and as I closed my eyes once more and pressed my head upon the pillow it seemed to me as if my mind were attempting to recall some name which was pregnant with good or evil to her I loved so deeply.

When I again awoke it was past midday. I arose with difficulty, and was startled by my haggard appearance in the looking-glass.

I commenced my toilet. As I did so the whole scene

came back on my memory, and one name rang in my ears as though pronounced by mocking fiends, "The Barrow of Bordeaux."

I began to strop my razor. I shuddered as the bright steel flashed in the sun—now this way, now that; but backwards or forwards, roughly or smoothly, it had but one voice for me,—

"*The—Bar—row—of—Bor—deaux.*"

Do what I would that morning—do it too, how I would—I could not shake off that one accursed name, in which seemed to be collected all the mysterious horrors of the past night.

I would go out. In this state to remain in was madness. And yet as I was could I visit Clotilde? Ought she not to be warned of some danger? "But of what danger?" said I to myself, wildly. The answer came back in the air, "The Barrow of Bordeaux, Monsieur; the Barrow of Bordeaux!"

She would have been wondering, too, why I had not come to visit her as usual. Strange that I should not have thought of that before. "I must write," I said, "and send her my excuses. This is the first day that I have missed seeing her for months. To what will she attribute this neglect?" I cried aloud, as I raised my pen in the air. Had I invoked the evil spirits that there should come back ever the same answer—"The Barrow of Bordeaux?" In vain I attempted a letter to her. I could not even begin properly. I commenced, "My dearest Barrow" —— and tore it up in a fury.

"Dearest Clotilde," I wrote, "I have been very unwell, and

unable to leave my barrow" —— My pen wrote this in spite of me, and I used the knife. Then I went on—"Unable to leave my bed all day. Ah, dearest, how I suffer! What a loss is mine! I shall see you to-morrow, early —— as usual, in the *salle à manger*. Adieu, till then, my own!" . . . I signed my initials, and dispatched my valet with it to the Hôtel Champvilliers.

Then I sallied forth. My one object now was to discover the place where I had parted with the men Martin and Gaspar on the previous night. If I could not find it by day, the search for it at night would be a hopeless task, and at night I had to meet them. Should I fail in this, what misery was there not in store for me? To know that the sword was ever hanging above our heads, to know that we were walking on undermined ground, this was to be our married life; for, if their words meant anything at all—and could sober senses doubt this for one minute?—they meant all this to the fullest extent. There was a danger threatening both myself and Clotilde—so much was evident. But whence was it to come?

Alas! Water in the desert is less difficult to find than was the archway where these two men had disappeared. Archway after archway of similar construction I explored minutely, but could find nothing by which I could identify the one for which I was searching. Most of them led into courtyards, and were private property; a few were mere passages between two streets. None—and this was by far the strangest thing—were situated near either the sea, a river, a ditch, or well, so as to account for the splash

and plunge which had accompanied the disappearance of the man Gaspar.

I walked about, my knee causing me much trouble, until dusk, and with sunset I gave up the search in despair. I dared not ask anyone. And, indeed, for what could I inquire, save for the Barrow of Bordeaux? I could name neither the street nor the arch—no, nor any street, house, or arch in the neighbourhood. One chance remained, and that was to visit the pier at midnight, in the hope that the two smugglers, for so I still supposed them to be, on not finding me at the rendezvous, would seek the spot where we had first encountered one another.

On my return to my chamber a short note lay on my table from Clotilde. She sympathised with me deeply; and she, too, was ill—or, at least, so very unwell that, had I called, it would have been impossible for me to have seen her.

Was this the beginning of the woe which threatened her? What could ail her; her whom I had left but the day before full of health and good spirits! As I meditated, standing before the mantelpiece, the pendulum swinging backwards and forwards seemed to convey the old warning answer, "The Barrow of Bordeaux; the—Bar—row—of—Bor—deaux."

There were many people dining at the restaurant that night, strangers to me, I thanked Heaven, but as it seemed to me with but one topic of conversation among them, the Barrow of Bordeaux. Hurriedly finishing my portion, I paid the bill, and without waiting for the change I rushed from

the house to cool my burning forehead in the sea breeze. I lighted a cigar and took up my old position.

I will not weary you with the details of my waiting and watching on that miserable night. I will not recount how the patrol's password seemed to be borne towards me on the air, sounding like the Barrow of Bordeaux; how the waves moaned it sadly, how the winds sighed it plaintively, and how the lights and shadows spelt the words in fantastic letters over and over again. Midnight sounded—one, two, three—and I was still keeping my lonely watch on the pier.

CHAPTER V.

A TERRIBLE TRIAL.

WEARIED, ill in body and mind, I sought my couch at daybreak, but to no purpose. The words still rang in my ears and banished sleep. At ten I was to be at the Hôtel Champvilliers. I roused myself for an effort, and made up my mind to a course of conduct which would at least relieve me, to a certain extent, from the burden which was hourly becoming too terrible for me to bear. Clotilde should hear from me the danger, whatever it was, that threatened her; and, as I not unnaturally considered, perhaps she herself could better than anyone else tell me the import of these ill-omened words.

Full of this plan, I ran to the Count's house, and, mounting the stairs, stood before Clotilde in the drawing-room. My excited manner, which I in vain attempted to calm, and my pallid face alarmed her.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed; "what has happened?"

"Command your agitation, my dear Clotilde," I said. "Believe me, it is nothing—nothing, that is, of which, if you are but forewarned, you need be afraid. Tell me," I whispered, and my voice reminded me strangely of the hoarse tones of Gaspar, with the patch over his eye—"Tell

me, what "—(I tried to smile, for I saw that already she was terrified, but I felt that I must go on, at any risk—"tell me what is the mystery—what?"—here I laid hold gently of her arm and pressed my lips close to her ear—"what is *the Barrow of Bordeaux!*"

She gave me one look—I shall never forget it—and, raising her arms wildly aloft, uttered a piercing scream and fell senseless at my feet.

Before I could recover myself—before I could do more than cry "Clotilde, my own!"—her father, the aged Count, his white hair streaming over his morning robe, threw open the folding-doors and rushed in, followed by the Countess and the servants.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, horror-struck.

"Mademoiselle has fainted," I gasped out. "I had only this moment entered, and"——

"What have you said to her?" asked her mother, who had by this time thrown herself on her knees by the apparently lifeless form of Clotilde.

"Nothing!" I cried. "I call Heaven to witness, nothing! I did but ask a question on which depended much of her—of our—happiness."

"What question?" demanded the Count, sternly.

Now then at last would come, I hoped, the explanation. "I asked her," I replied calmly, "what is *the Barrow of Bordeaux?*"

Had a bomb exploded among them greater consternation could not have prevailed. The Count started back pale as death, and the Countess, with one loud, agonis-

ing cry of pain, fell by the side of her unhappy daughter.

The domestics cowered in the background, and seemed too overcome with terror either to offer assistance or to oppose my exit.

The Count was the first to recover himself. "Quit my house for ever!" he cried, with suppressed fury, "and fortunate will it be for you"——

Here the noise of arms on the staircase attracted my attention, and in another second a sergeant of gendarmes entered the room.

The Count could only point to me as he staggered to a chair.

Briefly the gendarme required an explanation.

Briefly and as collectedly as I could I gave it him.

"Sergeant," I said, "I only asked this young lady—I only mentioned to her father—the Barrow of Bor——"

He did not allow me to finish my sentence. "Silence, criminal!" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder. "Gendarmes, arrest him."

In one instant I was a prisoner. Handcuffed and uncovered, with gendarmes with loaded muskets on either side and in front and behind me, I was marched through the town to the Hôtel de Ville.

By the time I reached this ancient building the crowd around and in front of the steps was enormous. Expressions of sympathy for the oppressed, and of hatred of the oppressors met my ears. There was yet a chance. The populace of France, ever ready for an *émeute*, have only to be

addressed by me in stirring words in order to arouse them in my behalf.

"Concitoyens et concitoyennes," I cried suddenly, turning and facing them, "I am arrested because I merely asked, I swear it, what is the Barrow of Bord——"

The yells and execrations that arose from the crowd, which was indeed lashed into fury—but, alas! against me—showed me, even more than the missiles which now assailed my head and shoulders, which I could with difficulty protect with my manacled hands, that I could expect no mercy from them. At the point of the bayonet, and flinching beneath the stones and brickbats with which the sky was darkened, I was roughly pushed into the court-house.

The Maire, a venerable and amiable-looking man, was sitting on a bench behind a table whereat were seated a few town councillors, with their clerks. The business of the morning had been just concluded when I appeared before them.

"With what is he charged?" asked the Maire, benignly.

Something in his countenance told me that I might confide the cause of all my sufferings up to the present time to him. In as few words as possible, and with the utmost respect, I explained that I had been to see my fiancée this morning, Mdlle. Clotilde; that I had scarcely asked her a question, when she fainted; that her father and mother, evidently much excited at witnessing their daughter's illness, had handed me over to the gendarmes, who, in discharge of their duty—for which I did not blame them, on the contrary—had entered the house.

The Maire listened with attention, and expressed himself satisfied, so far, with my explanation—which, so far as the Maire could question upon the facts, as I had stated them, was corroborated by the officer of gendarmes.

"Did you not ask Mdlle. Clotilde's father," said a young councillor, pleasantly, "for some explanation?"

The Maire, who was evidently a man of sense, requested me to answer this question as a mere matter of form prior to my receiving my discharge, which, he added, he should have great pleasure in pronouncing.

His kind manner encouraged familiarity on my part, and set me completely at my ease.

"It is, indeed, sir," I said, smiling, "a most ridiculous case, and one in which I own I am at a loss to account for the conduct of those who till now have been my dearest and best friends. The fact is, M. le Maire, as I have already said to Clotilde, I only wanted to know what was the *Barrow of——*"

"Grand Dieu!" exclaimed the Maire, his whole visage changing to one of the utmost horror; while the councillors fell back in their seats as though they had been struck lifeless by lightning.

"Double his fetters!" cried the Maire, and the gaoler obeyed his command.

"This is too grave a matter for this court," said the chief magistrate, after conferring with the councillors. "Here is his warrant of commitment until the next session of the Supreme Court of Assize at Lyons. Gentlemen, the sitting is terminated. Officers, do your duty." Then, turning

towards me, every trace of benignity having disappeared from his countenance,

"As for you, execrable monster," he said, "there may yet be time for repentance, though there can be no room for hope, and no justice in France if such as you were pardoned. Go, then, wretched man, assassin of society, outrager of all laws, human and Divine, I would not add one word to your sufferings by any sentence that I can pronounce. I thank Heaven this day that it is not within my province to utter the word which shall consign you to your doom—a doom that most surely awaits you from a higher court than mine—a doom so terrible that, unless sustained by the strongest and sternest sense of duty, even the most potent Judge in the land could not dare to award without a shudder. Go, outcast; repent, but dream not of hope. For you the word 'hope' does not exist!"

Maddened by my wrongs, weakened by suffering, I rushed towards the table. In a moment the whole court was in an uproar, and, battling with odds, fighting with the fury of a wild beast against his inhuman captors, I fell wounded, and at last, happily, senseless.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRISONER—THE ESCAPE—A SURPRISE.

HAVE little more to tell.

The Superior Court, in all its majesty, heard my case patiently to the end, and called upon me for my defence. Once more I was obliged to pronounce the fatal words, and scarcely was the first syllable out of my mouth than a thrill of horror ran through the court, and the President, ringing his bell, ordered me to be silent: and in a voice whose tremor betrayed his agitation pronounced my sentence,

"*Imprisonment with hard labour for life.*"

The Galleys! * * *

Was this the end of all my dreams of happiness?—the galleys?

I was led out from that court a feeble, tottering old man, my hair as white as it is now. I was placed in cell No. 23.

The number recalled me for an instant to myself. That day—the day on which I was sentenced to the galleys for life—was my twenty-third birthday! Then for the first time I sank on the stone floor, and my huge grief found vent in tears.

* * * * * * *

I pass over the next forty years of my miserable life. I

was moved from one prison to another until, spent with labour and worn by sorrow, I was unable to perform even the light tasks imposed upon me by the leniency of the authorities under whom I was placed.

The monotony of a prison life has little to relieve it save rats, and with these I soon learnt to be friendly. Several of these formerly ferocious animals I taught to play amusing antics, to fetch and carry: and it was a touching sight to watch their streaming eyes when, on a Sunday evening, they would sit in a semicircle before me to hear me perform such airs as I could play on the straws which the gaoler had allowed me to pull out of my mattress, and which I had contrived to fashion into a kind of flageolet for this particular purpose.

All that prisoners have ever done for amusement I did. I watched spiders without any beneficial result; I taught blackbeetles a sort of alphabet, and shared half of my allowance of water daily with a pale blue flower that had somehow struck root in the grating of my window. Since the first day of my incarceration I had never once mentioned the dreaded Barrow of Bordeaux, and for a long time even the name and the circumstances seemed to have disappeared from my memory. Once, and once only, on what I believed to be my fiftieth birthday, I had even hinted at it, and then it was to the kind and affable gaoler who used often to stop and chat with me upon what was going on outside.

The effect upon him was that of a pistol-shot. He struck his forehead, and, waiving me from him with his other hand, rushed out of my cell. The next day a new attendant

waited upon me—a black man who did not understand either French or English—and I never saw my friendly gaoler again.

Fatal to myself and my friends, I determined from that moment to bury the hated name in oblivion.

How I contrived to escape from the fortress of F—— I dare not mention here, lest some might be alive whom this information would incriminate. Enough that I escaped. Enough that a rusty nail, the prison flower which turned out to be a creeper, and my counterpane torn to rags, served me on this occasion.

On dropping from the rock I signalled to a large vessel which was flying the British colours ; their boat put out to sea, rowed by four stout hearts, who reached me just as I was sinking for the third time and the guns from the bastion were giving notice of the escape of a convict.

When I next awoke to consciousness it was in a luxurious berth. A trim ship's steward stood by my side.

"Where am I?" I inquired, first in French, then in English.

"Safe aboard, Sir," was the answer.

"Aboard what?"

Imagine the tremendous start of pleasure and surprise that I gave when he replied.

"Aboard the yacht Clotilde."

"Clotilde!" I shouted.

"Clotilde," he answered, calmly. "Schooner-rigged, 200 tons; owner, Sir Charles Denmont."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

FELL back on my pillow, staring at him in blank astonishment. Then I begged him to repeat his information. He did so, apparently annoyed at my seeming doubt of his veracity. I thanked him, and, having drank off the mixture which he proffered me, I turned round on my side, and, laying my aching head against the snowy white pillow, was soon fast asleep—the soothing effect, perhaps, of the drink.

But one thought was with me, dreaming or waking—gratitude for my escape, and, above all, for my being housed on board my own yacht Clotilde, which I had never seen since the day of her purchase.

"Yes," I murmured in my sleep, so they told me afterwards, "Clotilde, two hundred tons, Sir Charles Barrow."

But here, at last, thank Heaven, that most fatal word fell harmlessly on English ears. I had no difficulty in proving my identity to the Captain's satisfaction. He was a thorough seaman, and, consequently superstitious. Fortunately, his superstition was in this instance rightly directed ; for he had consulted an astrologer, who had foretold my reappearance at the very place and hour when I was providentially picked up by my own men, in my own yacht. Captain Bomer was

a veteran of seventy, as hale and hearty as when he first took charge of the Clotilde.

From him I learnt that during my absence my horse had won the Derby nearly half a century ago ; that Sir Charles Denmont, my uncle, had carefully nursed the property which I had purchased in England, and on his death had transmitted it into the hands of certain honest trustees, who had so improved the estate for my benefit that when I arrived to claim my own I found myself in receipt of £500,000 per annum. These excellent trustees had also kept up my yacht, inspecting it once every year, and sending the captain on voyages of discovery in search of me, voyages which he turned to account by acquiring vast domains in Africa, America, and the north of Europe. To my delight and amazement, I ascertained that my name was the first on the commercial list in every capital of Europe, while the impetus that I had given to trade in all quarters, and my valuable assistance (that is, the valuable assistance rendered by my agents) in repressing the slave trade had earned for me the appellation of the Liberator of the Negroes.

At sixty-three I was recommencing life in my own country.

For seven years I pursued the even tenour of my way, and raised a handsome mausoleum to the memory of my uncle, the late Sir Charles, whose title I had inherited. I gave out that I had travelled far and wide, and, having lost my way in Central Africa, had been unable to retrace my steps. This satisfied all inquiries, and my profuse liberality stifled all impertinent curiosity. I stood for Parliament, and gained

the day triumphantly. Then, as you know, I married a young lady of noble descent and of truly noble qualities both of head and heart. The passion of love had died years since in my breast, it was revived in the person of our only child, whom I called Clotilde. My wife objected to this name at first; but, being accustomed to indulge my whims (as she playfully called them), at last cheerfully consented. On the occasion of the christening I presented Lady Denmont with a set of jewels worth £50,000. The child's coral was a monarch's ransom.

At the end of this seven years the old curiosity got the better of me. Without here dwelling on my reasons—for I hasten towards the end—I determined to learn, before it was too late, the cause of the infamous persecution to which I had been subjected.

One morning, bidding my wife and child farewell, I set sail, and before night the yacht Clotilde was anchored off Boulogne.

In company with my skipper, on whose discretion I could implicitly rely, I visited all the lowest haunts of the town, and, employing the greatest caution, prosecuted my inquiries with regard to the two men Gaspar and Martin. I offered rewards in secret, and at least one hundred Gaspars and two hundred Martins responded to my invitation. They were of all ages and from all parts of France, but none of them were the Gaspar and the Martin I wanted.

The town, too, had so totally changed that it was with the greatest difficulty I recognized my own house (now a hotel); while in an extensive, gaudy-looking restauration I fancied I

saw something that reminded me of the once noble mansion of the Comte de Champvilliers. The latter name was unknown in the place, but an old soldier with whom I was conversing one day informed me that he remembered having served in Algeria under a colonel of that name, whose daughter had, years before, entered a convent, and who himself died nobly in battle.

After spending a month in these fruitless investigations, I was about to embark for England, when one fine night, as I was standing, smoking my cigar, on the pier—and what memories the curling smoke called up before me!—my attention was attracted by a woman in the picturesque costume of a Boulogne fisherwoman. She was standing on the beach below, listlessly throwing pebbles into the sea.

I leant over, watching her. It was my fate that she should interest me. It was my fate that, half unconsciously, I murmured to myself, "Shall I never know it? . . . . What mystery was hidden in the Barrow of"——

A soft voice took up my broken sentence. It uttered the word "Bordeaux."

The voice came from the gipsy girl below. She looked up, and our eyes met. Hastily descending, I joined her on the beach.

"Here at last," she said, dreamily.

"Here at last," I replied.

She placed her finger on her lips and turned towards the steps leading up to the town.

"Come," she said; "I have waited for you. Follow me."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET OF A LIFE.—THE CRONE'S REPARATION.

STORM which had long been threatening now broke over our heads. The lightning played fiercely in the heavens, and one fearful flash struck the pavement at my feet and ran along the gutters, now swollen with the torrents of rain. Suddenly we paused, as if for shelter, under an archway. Not for shelter; no, though that we partially obtained. But now, as the awful thunder-clap which had succeeded the deadly flash died away in the distance, I recognised distinctly the spot where, half a century before, I had stood with the two men—the very archway, unchanged, unaltered, that had seen the commencement of all my misery.

"You are not afraid?" asked my guide, as she touched a rusty iron ring in the damp stone wall.

"I am an Englishman," I replied; "and were I not, I am seventy-two years of age, weak, and unarmed."

"True," she replied, pressing back the ring, and discovering a low doorway, beyond which was a steep flight of stairs. "Follow me. Ascend."

My eyes gradually becoming accustomed to the obscurity, I climbed the narrow staircase, which trembled beneath us at every step. With a heavy clang the door closed behind

me, and on looking back I could see no sign of the place where I had so recently entered.

Up, up, up, in a fetid, dank atmosphere, such light as came through the chinks and crannies of the walls showing the abject squalor of the miserable dwelling-place, if such it could by any possibility be for any human creature.

"We are here," said my guide, stopping before a door, at which she knocked three times.

A faint voice from within bade us enter.

The girl motioned me to pass in before her. I did so, and she, shutting the door after me, remained outside.

In a low garret, whose utter wretchedness, in keeping with what I had already seen, was rendered more apparent by the dim light of a candle, which flickered and guttered in the draughts, lay on a truckle-bed—if bed it could be called—an old crone, whose pinched and sharpened features, and thin, bony arms and palsied hands, stretched out on the ragged coverlet, told of the last stage of famine and disease.

Her eyes were fixed upon me with a glassy stare, as if death were already setting them at rest for ever.

Feebly, and with the utmost difficulty she spoke, while her breath came labouring slowly and heavily.

"I have sought you long," she said, "and I thank Heaven that I shall not die without doing the one act of reparation which alone remains in my power."

A fearful paroxysm of coughing ensued. After giving her some water, which I held to her lips in a small cracked

earthenware cup, she summoned up strength for a fresh effort, and continued,

"My time on earth is short. Swear to me that what I shall reveal to you of . . . of . . . the"—— She seemed to struggle convulsively with the words which came to her tongue. I knew what she would have said, and whispered in her ear,

"The Barrow of"——.

"Hush!" she murmured, as if fearful, even there, of being overheard, while a shudder passed through her emaciated frame. The storm, which had subsided for a while, now recommenced again with redoubled violence. The room swayed to and fro, as though lashed by the Atlantic waves, and, as the planks and rafters cracked and bulged above and around me, I feared lest the next moment should witness the fall of the tottering ruin, which at every blast threatened to bury us in his own destruction.

"Speak," I cried, "ere it is yet too late."

"I will," she replied, faintly; then, rousing herself with the last energy of death, she clutched me with her withered hand, "Swear that with what I shall reveal you will never injure those whom I place in your power!"

"I swear it!"

"Swear that, except for justice, you will not breathe the names of those whom——"

She gasped for breath. I intimated that I understood her meaning, and gave her my solemn promise.

"And for her—for my daughter"—she whispered, "you will provide . . . you will . . . for you are rich . .

you will give her sufficient money to enable her to leave this detested country!" I said I would; but she continued, energetically, "No, no! When I am gone, you may forget. . . . Give it now."

I assured her that I had nothing about me but a small sum in English money. Suddenly remembering my cheque-book, which I carried in my pocket-book, I tore out a leaf, and with my ink-pencil wrote a draught on my bankers at Boulogne for a hundred thousand francs.

"Give it her now—quick—quick!" she cried, hoarsely.

I opened the door and roused the girl, who had fallen asleep on the landing.

"Your mother bids me give you this," I said.

"The price?" she asked; then added, "Good!" and placed the paper in her bosom.

Once again I placed myself by the bedside. The miserable crone, exhausted by her efforts, was fast sinking. I leant over her and said, distinctly, in her ear,

"The secret—now."

I fell back horrified, as, like a galvanised corpse, she raised herself suddenly on her elbow, and, seizing the candle in her right hand, held it high above her head.

"Quick!" she gasped. "The saw—the rope . . . there at your feet."

I looked down, and picked up a small carpenter's saw and a piece of rope. I had not noticed them before.

"Hold them," she continued, fiercely, stretching herself out towards me, her eyes glaring like those of a wild beast, and her whole body trembling with the fearful frenzy of what

I knew now must be her last agony. "So . . . kneel, man—kneel!"

Unhesitatingly I knelt. A terrific blast shook the rafters, and I heard a crash above me as of a falling roof. She heeded it not.

"Now," she cried. "You who would know why Gaspar . . . why Martin . . . both dead, oh, Heaven! both dead! . . . why they led you on to your doom . . . listen!"

I bent my head forward eagerly to catch every word.

She continued, "They told you the name . . . ha! ha! . . . they told you, as you thought, all . . . But you have now to learn—and from me—from *me*—Heaven forgive me! . . . from me that the Barrow . . . "

She paused. "Speak!" I urged her, clenching my hands wildly, as the perspiration rolled in beads from off my forehead.

"The Barrow of Bordeaux was—was . . .. Ah!" With a fearful scream she threw her arms up in the air . . . the candle dropt from her grasp . . . and as an awfully vivid flash of lightning tore the roof above us and passed through the room, followed by a sharp, crackling report, as of a platoon of musketry . . she fell backwards on the pillow . . . *dead!*

* * * * *

My friend, the secret perished with her.

It was past ten the next morning before I regained the yacht, and we were well out to sea before I bethought me of the draught for a hundred thousand francs which I had given the day when we put back, and I at once made inquiries at

the bank. It had been paid in coin early that morning, and, as no signature was necessary, there was no evidence by which to trace its recipient.

From that day to this I have never heard one word more which could enlighten me on this painful subject. The mystery remains unsolved. If anyone now living can unravel it, let him communicate with you, my dear friend, in the first place, to whom I give full permission for the publication of this extraordinary narrative. This only will I add, not as an inducement, but as a token of the value at which I shall estimate any service rendered me in this matter, that a sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, now lying at Messrs. . . . and one of the finest estates in Virginia, will be the reward given to anyone who may be able to reveal to me, fully and entirely, the terrible secret involved in the words which I now write for the last time, *The Barrow of Bordeaux.*

THE END.

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